

Alphabet of Reality - 1

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVINE FORMS



SRI GANESHA

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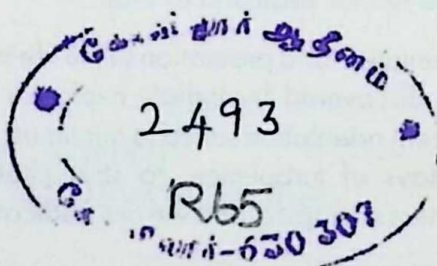
by Sri Kant

**"Like the gentle dew that
falls unseen and unheard,
yet brings into blossom the
fairest of roses, has been
the contribution of India
to the thought of the world."**

—Swami Vivekananda

**"All knowledge begins and
ends with wonder; but the
first wonder is the child of
ignorance; the second wonder
is the parent of adoration."**

—Coleridge



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Our Mission

Modern biologists have to a great extent traced the mechanical laws of evolution whereas India's sages through their deeper search discovered the laws of Eternal Values — *Sanathana Dharma* — the spiritual thrust inherent in the lifestream prompting it to ever greater realms of unfoldment.

It is this awareness of the spiritual impetus beyond mechanism that helped India renew herself every age — a capacity so well highlighted in the words of Dr. Jagdish Chandra Bose : "By a continuous living tradition of rejuvenescence this land has readjusted itself through unnumbered transformations."

This vision of progress through constant inner renewal and expansion guided by the wisdom of a heritage that boldly explored into the very essence of life, has equipped India to make significant contributions for the further evolution of man.

Presentation and promotion of the life-transforming values discovered by India's explorers of Truth, with a modern orientation suited to our times, is a need of these days of turbulence, to strengthen human consciousness and spirit, and we are dedicated to this mission.

alphabet of Reality - I

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by
Srikant

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Foreword

FAITH in the Supreme Power gives relief and solace to man's worldly afflictions. It brings him the strength and reassurance of communion with the Reality behind the transcendental phenomenal world.

Man is in constant pursuit of happiness. Experience makes him realise that he cannot derive abiding happiness from the evanescent objects of the world. That which gives him much pleasure today often turns out to be a great source of suffering tomorrow. The thoughtful inquirers of India recognised that the real source of happiness is their own consciousness, not their senses, body or the objects of the world. This made them meditate upon the nature of consciousness which led them to the experience of a blissful eternal Reality which is the source of their consciousness and of the phenomenal world.

Human phenomenon has an inborn urge to evolve from the biological to the psycho-social and spiritual dimensions. Every pursuit for happiness is in a way an expression of this urge, although many lose sight of the harmonious natural path, go awry and suffer. Others cultivate the moral and spiritual values of life, which is in the real line of human

evolution, experiencing an increasing sense of freedom and happiness. And a few of them even attain the bliss of Supreme Wisdom.

Man exists in a world of forms and qualities, which like the colours latent in the transparent light, have their source in Supreme Reality. By nature the human mind is conditioned by these forms and qualities. To draw strength and wisdom from the Source, mind has to be trained and refined so that it becomes a fit receptacle to contain and express the divine glory. As a practical aid for this communion, the sages conceived suitable forms that symbolise sublime spiritual principles. Worship of such divine forms invoke these principles and the forms function as powerful conduits of divine grace and guidance.

The earliest literary works of mankind, the Vedas contain invocations to various Gods and Goddesses. In the *Karma Kaanda* of the Vedas, there are elaborate descriptions of the modes of worship and the *Manthras* to invoke the spiritual powers represented by them. It was in the age of the Upanishads, the unique philosophical treatises on sublime spiritual truths, special efforts were made to explain the inner significance of the Vedic concepts. In them the Rishis declared that it is the same Reality that people choose to call by different names— *ekam sad, vipraa bahudhaa vadanthi*. They called the supreme Truth as Brahman. They did not condemn the worship of different forms of Reality, as the worship would help to refine the mind and equip it to be receptive and to comprehend the supreme Truth. They, however, warned

against any fanatical sticking to the form aspect and advised to use them intelligently as a stepping stone to spiritual Reality, realising the fact that the Reality symbolised by the forms transcends all forms.

While the Upanishads contain sublime philosophical discussions on the Absolute, the Puraanas are replete with symbolic stories of perennial interest to the legend-loving human mind, and in these the great Rishis embodied high philosophical and spiritual principles. These legends served to inculcate higher values in society. Several forms of deities were conceived during the Puraanic period. For a superficial observer the stories in the Puraanas may appear as fictitious legends conceived by human imagination; but for an earnest seeker they will gradually reveal their secrets, for which the keys can be often found in the same texts. Likewise, the forms of deities are pregnant with profound meaning. Those who explore their significance will find that their several heads and hands, the various weapons, the ornaments, the garments and even their colours signify lofty spiritual principles. As the Upanishads try to make us aware of the highest principles relating to the eternal Source of this wonderful universe, the divine forms of Puraanic origin throb with the vision and power of that wisdom.

I am glad this series of books, *Alphabet of Reality*, are intended to explore the language of divine forms beginning with the worship of Sri Ganesha, known as Sri Vighneshwara, who wards off all obstacles. The effort I hope will gladden all those who believe in *Sanaathana Dharma*, the natural law of

human refinement and perfection.

The form of Sri Ganesha differs from other Godly forms. The face of an elephant having one tusk, a human body with a big pot-belly, four hands, the body entwined by a serpent and a rat as the mount of the huge figure! He is worshipped both for material prosperity and spiritual illumination. Sri Ganesha is the Presiding Deity of the divine energy in man, *Kundalini*, which is capable of elevating human consciousness to its supreme state.

In the hymns on Sri Ganesha, He is extolled as the very symbol of the supreme Truth that transcends all qualities and forms. His form symbolises both the way and the goal of spiritual pursuit. This book will be thought-provoking even to the modern scientist for its rational approach to a great theme. I hope that the seekers of spiritual wisdom will find this a useful compendium. May Lord Ganesha's Grace illumine our path for harmonious life and spiritual fulfilment.

Swami Mridananda

President, Sri Ramakrishna Math

Puranattukara

Thrissur, Kerala

Introduction

INDIA'S heritage holds profound spiritual truths. Those who have the mind to enquire come by consoling facts about life in her philosophical texts. These facts give man a meaningful vision about himself and his destiny.

Knowledge unfolds its greater fields as human quest advances. If the pursuit is honest, free, unbiased and with the humble passion of a mountaineer who yearns to see more expansive vistas at every climbing step, the realms of awareness and beauty expand, enriching the texture of life. The quest refines, strengthens and expands the human personality.

Modern scientific enquiry began solely on a materialistic basis. From its early beginnings in the sixteenth century, as science advances to its stupendous discoveries in the closing phase of the twentieth century, we see its worldview turning more philosophical, with an Einstein or Carl Jung tending to speak like a Yajñavalkya or Pathanjali of ancient India.

There are people who believe that the forms of Gods and Goddesses are meaningless figments of imagination of

primitive ages. It is difficult to judge which age is more primitive in cultural terms — the age of the Rig Vedic Rishis, who could conceive high human ideals: "Let the whole world live in harmony and peace"; "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side", or our age of flourishing trade in weapons of mass annihilation! When false signals from computers hold the potential to convert mankind into piles of ash any moment, everyone in our times has to contemplate on what O. Nash has said: "There has been lot of progress during my lifetime. But I am afraid it's heading in the wrong direction."

In different phases of human history, in this ancient land lived intellectual prodigies, who boldly explored into the mysteries of life and gained the spiritual wisdom, which they passed on to posterity through symbolism — by means of stories, diagrams and forms, enabling the knowledge to survive the long passage of time.

The philosophical trends of modern science, which tend to converge towards the insights of the seers, equip the present-day intellect to probe deeper into ancient wisdom for its redicoverry in the modern context, as would help man to transform the present period of darkness and uncertainty into that of light and reassurance.

The traditional sciences and the philosophical concepts of India are pregnant with profound vistas of knowledge about the human phenomenon and Nature. For example, the direct experience of thousands keep up the relevance of astrology alive, even in our highly technological age, though it eludes a convincing scientific explanation. This shows the

existing gap between ancient insights and modern scientific perspectives. It points out that the ancient explorers had wrested out some keys from Nature to open some of the mystery boxes of human life and Nature. The wondrous genetic code that determines the structural details of a living being was an unsuspected biological secret during Darwin's time. Yet, it was there subtly directing the destiny of life, whether someone had discovered it or not. Nature keeps away many of her profound secrets from the observation of the scientific eye and it seems that the ancient Rishis had a breakthrough access to the subtle realities, as they were earnest seekers, not mere technologists using their brains for physical comforts and material gains.

Man's pursuit for knowledge about himself and about his relation with Nature begins from even lower psychological levels. A leap from a lower to a superior level often needs the help of a spring-board. The concept of deities, the facets of Brahman, the supreme Reality, is such an aid for inner exploration. There is no fundamental distinction in the inner significance of various deities despite the external variations in names and forms. They are all extolled in essence as Brahman. Forms merge into the principles they signify and into the wisdom they convey.

Any fanatical concept of a formless one-God is alien to Indian philosophy, which recognises the infinite diversity as the expression of One Super Reality. It inspires to see the divine Essence in diversity. It gives one the freedom of choice to hitch on any desirable form or forms or a formless concept,

that symbolise that Essence as to merge in communion with Reality and realise the fact that the seeker and the worshipful deity are essentially the same blissful Brahman, which is the transcendental source of all diversity beyond the transitory phenomena of life and death.

In the Indian philosophical context God is not just a formless superman, who is partial to those who avow faith in some particular religion. He is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* — Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. He is unconditioned freedom. If He has no freedom to assume forms, He is not Almighty. The universe of innumerable forms, is an expression of God's freedom to take forms. The universe is not a creation of God. It is the omnipresent He Himself. Man is not a condemned slave of God, by praising whom the slave gets manifold material gifts. Through a discipline of inner evolution, man can expand his consciousness and transcend his biological limitations and realise the freedom and glory of God. Everything is God only — *eeshaa vaasyamidam sarvam*. There is no anti-God. It is the distorted conditioned ego, not in harmony with the blissful Fact, that turns itself into a demoniac *Asura* or Satan. When the fallen ego realises its inner Essence, it regains its divinity. Submission of man's conditioned ego to his own blissful and powerful inner dimensions is the means to raise himself to a superior cultural status, to a superior civilization. The forms of deities are meaningful symbols of this scope of human transcendence. They signify the freedom of choice in man's spiritual quest and evolution.

The forms were evolved in the super-consciousness state

of seers for explaining the diverse facets of Reality. Mystic diagrams and forms of deities are letters of a unique language of symbolism. This series of books, *Alphabet of Reality*, begins with the form of Sri Ganesha, the God of auspiciousness and remover of obstacles, without propitiating whom no ritual or ceremony is performed in the Hindhu way of life.

The Ganesha concept is potent with many shades of sublime meaning. Here we are mainly examining the theme in its aspect as the guiding light in the evolutionary unfoldment of human consciousness.

In this series an attempt is being made to probe into the deeper meaning of divine forms and their spiritual significance. The effort is neither to confine the concepts within an intellectual frame, nor to explain the ancient insights, limiting them in the bounds of the present-day scientific knowledge, but to use the emerging philosophical trends of modern thought as pointers to the transcendental dimensions of existence, discovered by India's ancient seers. This approach is rather new. It may have its shortcomings; yet some of the points raised may stimulate thought for further enquiry. With this attitude, the following study is placed before readers.

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—Publisher



THE FORM

The Form and Its Significance

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम्
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भवेम

*Ajam nirvikalpam niraakaara-maykam
Niraanandam aanandam advaitha-poomnam
Param nirgunam nirvisaysham nireeham
Parabrahma-roopam Ganesham bhajayma*

"We worship Thee, the unborn, the absolute and the formless, beyond bliss and bliss itself, the indivisible and the infinite, the Supreme without attributes and desire, the very form of the transcendental Reality, Brahman." — *Sri Ganeshasthavam*.

That infinite, formless Reality invoked in the above hymn is represented here by a form with an elephant's face and human body. And his mount is a rat.

Symbol is the fundamental unit of human thought. It is the basic means of communication of primitive man as well as

For transliterating some of the proper names and Sanskrit words the pattern adopted is as follows : aa as in hat; i as in sit; ee as in see; u as in put; oo as in too; o as in got; ay as in day; the Visargah (:) sign is indicated by h.

a modern scientist for communication. India's ancient explorers of Truth evolved suitable symbols to explain the different facets of Reality, the Spirit behind the changing phenomena of the universe and man's relation with it. They devised a language of symbolic forms to help us read the book of the Spirit and enter into communion with the omnipotent Reality, Brahman.

It is said in *Sri Ramapoorvataapaneeya Upanishad* :

उपासकानां कार्यार्थं ब्रह्मणे रूपकल्पना

"Brahman, the Supreme Truth, is conceived in forms to aid the spiritual seekers."

India's broad approach to spiritual quest allows the choice of an appropriate discipline that suits the aptitude of the seeker.

Accordingly, one can approach the Supreme in its *nirguna* (attributeless) and *niraakaara* (formless) aspects or in its *saguna* (with attributes) and *saakaara* (with forms) aspects. While those who are temperamentally inclined to the path of knowledge (*jnaana-marga*) would prefer to know Reality in its aspect as the formless Absolute, the devotionally oriented, who are the majority, would naturally like to adore the Divine with attributes and forms and enjoy the sweet relationship of a personal communion, eventually realising the fact that the seeker and the Supreme Truth are essentially One.

A deity's form exceeds in many respects the ordinary human form, symbolising the divine potentials in man, attain-

able through inner expansion. The forms personify philosophical and spiritual principles. When the mind is directed to a divine form, the sublime powers of Brahman, represented by that form and latent in human consciousness, are invoked facilitating a communion with his greater Self, which gives strength, freedom and meaning to life.

The concept of a divine form is an aid for the conditioned ego of man to submit itself to the unconditioned Reality within. From the active aspect of a deity, the transcendental Truth gradually expands the consciousness of the seeker for the realisation of the divine wisdom that the Supreme is unborn, infinite, absolute and formless, as Sri Ganesha is extolled in the above-quoted hymn and that the seeker and the Supreme are one.

A Practical Discipline

Worship of divine forms is a part of practical science of spirituality evolved by India's exploring seers, the Rishis. They ask us not to blindly cling to forms but to intelligently use them as a threshold to the divine Reality. The human mind is normally conditioned from birth to death by names and forms. To guide the mind for a breakthrough to spiritual dimensions beyond names and forms, the forms that suggest sublime principles are wisely used. Here India's spiritual approach adopts the practical method of teaching a language. At first the student's attention is invited to the form of letters; and then to the meaning of words. Eventually the mind expands to comprehend even the abstract ideas expressed by the language.

In this symbolic language of divine forms evolved by the Rishis to unravel the sublime facets of Reality, Sri Ganesha forms the first letter. Ganapathi, Vighneshwara and Vinaayaka are other popular appellations of Sri Ganesha.

Universal Appeal

Archaeologists find that a deity with an elephant-man combination had a universal appeal and was worshipped in many parts of the world, in India, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Persia, Nepal, Tibet, China, Turkestan, Mongolia, Japan and possibly even in Bulgaria, Mexico and Peru, indicating a world-wide ramification of the Ganesha concept.

Both the Vaishnava and Saiva sects among Hindus, the Buddhists as well as Jains invoke Sri Ganesha in the beginning of all undertakings, mundane or spiritual, as he is Vighneshwara, the divine power that removes impediments, inertia and obstacles. According to a tradition of the Mahayana Buddhists, the Buddha himself had advised a highly mystical Manthra, *Ganapathi Hridayam* to his closest disciple, Ananda.

The form of Sri Ganesha symbolises a significant evolutionary theme related to the emergence of the universe and evolution of life. It will help us better understand the theme if we first examine briefly the ancient concepts about the origin of the universe and then some of the new trends in modern biology.

Evolution of the Universe

The question, 'is there a cause behind the perpetually changing drama of the universe and life,' that agitated the ancient thinkers of India, inspired them to embark upon an adventurous exploration on the nature of human consciousness. Their intensive meditative probe led them to the stupendous experience of a causeless Cause, which is the Source of all that is. They defined that supreme Reality as *Sat-Chit-Aananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss*.

They said that the universe and life are the emergents from that Reality — Brahman. Their basic fabric is the *Shakthi*, the power latent in Brahman. The *Shakthi* assumes an active state first as a primeval vibration represented by ॐ (OM) known as *Pranavam* or *Sabda Brahman*. From this stage arises an unmanifest and unconditioned field of many a subtle vibration with infinite creative potentials. This subtlest creative field is known as *Moola Prakrithi*, the Primeval Nature. The manifested Nature conditioned by time and space is one expression of the unfathomable creative potential of *Moola Prakrithi*, which is therefore called as *Mahaa Maaya*, (the supreme immeasurable creative infinitude), the *Brahmaanda* (the egg of Brahman) or *Hiranya Garbha* (the golden womb pregnant with everything). The essence of *Moola Prakrithi* is Brahman and therefore all that emerges from it are also basically that Essence which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Spinoza, the western philosopher, who heralded a transition from the classic religious view to a scientific one,

amplifies this vision of the ancient Rishis, in the following lines: "Nature consists of infinite attributes. To its essence pertains existence so that outside it there is no essence or existence. It thus coincides exactly with the essence of God."

The Concept of Praana

The seers said that the creative potential of *Moola Prakrithi* is first expressed as a form of energy called *Praana*. *Praana* shows the characteristics of consciousness. Modern physics is yet to discover it; however, there is a growing awareness of its possibility among the scientists, who closely study the evidences obtained today from a large number of experiments conducted in extrasensory perceptions. Werner Heisenburg, one of the founders of modern nuclear physics, does not rule out the existence of other kinds or forms of energy, "which we cannot match with the mathematical structure of atomic physics." *Praana*, according to the ancient seers, is the basic energy in the background of all that exists, whether it is physical energy, matter or living beings. When Max Planck, who revolutionised modern physics with his quantum theory, talks about the force of a conscious intelligent spirit, "which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and concentrates them into minute solar systems of the atom," he is underlining the concept of *Praana*, of the ancient Rishis.

The Two-fold Expression of Praana

From the energy aspect of *Praana* emerges the material universe, and its conscious aspect finds expression in living

beings. Through the process of organic evolution the factor of consciousness becomes more expressive. And in man it reaches the stage of regaining the glory and freedom of its transcendental divine essence. There is a revealing episode related to this in the *Bhagavatha Puraana*. God created many beings such as fish, birds and animals. Yet, He could not get a sense of fulfillment. At last when He created man, He felt very happy, because he could evolve one closer to Him, in His own image, as the biblical saying goes.

The origin of *Moola Prakrithi* from the primeval vibration OM, the emergence of the *Praana* energy from the *Moola Prakrithi*, *Praana's* manifestation as the material world and the living beings and the phenomenon's potential of rediscovering its divine Essence through man—all these are described by the Rishis as the grand play, the *leela*, of Reality.

A New Biological Vision

It is through the evolutionary refinement of the nervous system, consciousness finds increasing expression in living beings. Although the orthodox biologists still stick to their belief that consciousness is a chance-product of chemical action and reaction, there is now considerable rethinking. The following statement of Julian Huxley, the eminent biologist and thinker, who gave a new orientation to Darwinism, reflects a modern biological leaning towards the ancient concept of *Praana*. He writes in his essay *Philosophy in a World at War* that apart from lightning the only electrical

phenomena known before the late eighteenth century were the electric shocks produced by the electric eel, the electric ray and one or two other kinds of fish. He points out that as physiology progressed it understood the role of electric currents in all the vital activities of the body, although the electrical charges are extremely minute and can be detected only by the most refined instruments. And he reminds us of the fact that when we get down to the ultimate units of matter, such as electrons, their electrical properties seem to be the most essential aspect of matter.

"One may suggest," Julian Huxley states, "the same sort of thing has happened with mind. All the activities of the world-stuff are accompanied by mental as well as by material happenings; in most cases, however, the mental happenings are at such a low level of intensity that we cannot detect them; we may perhaps call them 'psychoid' happenings, to emphasise their difference in intensity and quality from our own psychical or mental activities. In those organs that we call brains, however, the psychoid activities are, in some way, made to reinforce each other until, as is clearly the case in higher animals, they reach a high level of intensity and they are the dominant and specific function of the brain of man. Until we learn to detect psychoid activities of low intensity, as we have learned to do with electrical happenings, we cannot prove this. But already it has become the simplest hypothesis that will fit the facts of developmental and evolutionary continuity." This is a pointer to the possibility that the present gap between the scientist's concept of 'blind' energy and the Rishi's

knowledge of the intelligence-laden energy *Praana* may lessen as science makes further advance.

The Cerebro-Spinal System-Basis of Man's Further Evolution

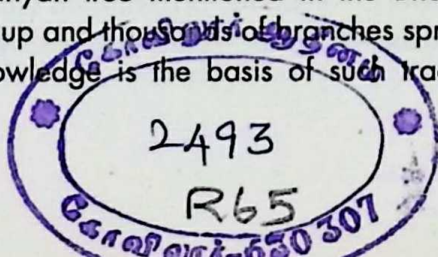
We should specially note the fact that centuries before modern scientists began to understand the functions of the various physiological systems in the human body, the Rishis gave prime importance to the cerebro-spinal system and its sublime energy currents as the basic field for man's further evolution. Only in recent times modern physiology became aware of the electrical nature of transmission of messages through the nervous system, and still this knowledge is confined to the mechanistic stages of chemical reactions, etc. Biology is yet to grasp the involvement of intelligence in the hormonal and nervous functions that maintain the body. The view that consciousness is a byproduct of chemical reactions in the nervous system, is like an ant telling its fellow beings during a visit to a sugar factory that all the men working there are the byproducts of the sugar manufactured by the machines! The Rishis discovered the subtle role of the intelligence-laden *Praana* energy from the fertilisation of an egg to the death of a being. When modern science can discover this fact, it may bring in a creative revolution in human attitudes.

Man stands at an evolutionary stage where the consciousness has reached a high level of intensity. He can further reinforce his consciousness by creatively intensifying it and achieve anything he wants. Jnanadeva, the youthful saint (thirteenth century A.D.) who composed *Jnanneshwari*, the

superb commentary on the Bhagavad-Geetha, says: "*Jo jay vamcheela tho thaylaaho*", that is, "Whatever you want, that you will get." If we negatively apply our consciousness and its energy to invent weapons, as man does today, we shall certainly make the most furious weapons to annihilate ourselves, as the demon Bhasmaasura of Puraanic lore, a classic example of the suicidal negativity in man, did to himself. Bhasmaasura earnestly desired to obtain a boon from Lord Shiva to reduce people into ash by a mere touch of their head by his hand. He did intense penance for the purpose. He certainly realised his desire, but annihilated himself by unwittingly placing his hand on his own head! Bhasmaasura means, the Ash Demon. How well the farsighted ancient seers have thus personified the senseless trend in man which can turn him into a heap of ash – a trend very much evident in our age of nuclear weapons!

But if we desire to have the greater freedom of a superior civilization of evolved human beings, that also we shall certainly achieve, as man is free to obtain whatever he wants. If his desire is negative, he suffers; and if positive, he expands to the greater dimensions of his being.

The ancient seers discovered the currents of sublime energy and its centres of concentration along the cerebro-spinal system and its nervous ramifications, which resemble very much the banyan tree mentioned in the Bhagavad-Geetha with roots up and thousands of branches spreading below. Their knowledge is the basis of such traditional



sciences as acupuncture, *Marma Vidya*, etc., which baffle modern scientists.

They discovered six major energy centres along the spinal chord which can further intensify and reinforce consciousness and raise it to its higher dimensions. Significantly these centres are known as the six *chakras*, the wheels of power that can reinforce and expand consciousness to its higher states. They are also known as the *padmas* — lotuses — signifying unfoldment and expansion. They are : the *Moolaadhaara*, at the very base of the spine, *Swaadhistaana*, at the level of the genital region, *Manipooraka*, near the navel, *Anaahatha*, near the heart, *Vishudhi*, at the throat, and *Aajna*, between the eye-brows. The sages revealed that the *Moolaadhaara*, at the base of the spine, is a powerful centre of evolutionary energy known as *Kundalini*. The name signifies that the energy normally remains in a potential state. When Kundalini gets activated in a creative direction, the human mind evolves achieving the glory and freedom of the superior dimensions of consciousness. This is often accompanied by new experiences and expression of new faculties.

Sri Ganesha - Presiding Deity of Moolaadhaara

Each of these six centres beginning with *Moolaadhaara*, has a Presiding Deity, who represents the special divine characteristic of the centre. The Presiding Deity of *Moolaadhaara* is Sri Ganesha, who signifies the energising divine power of *Kundalini*. Sri Ganesha's form has a message in this context, which shows the way of activating this sublime power.

There are two ways for man to conduct himself—either to direct his inner enegies creatively and evolve or to dissipate them and degenerate. He has the freedom for both.

Man often unintelligently misuses this great evolutionary energy, *Kundalini*, causing harm to society and bringing havoc on himself, as the demon Bhasmasura did. In every extraordinary physical feat or manifestation of great intellectual acumen, knowingly or unknowingly there is an involvement of this supra-physical energy. In such religious rites as fire-walking and in several miraculous acts, *Kundalini* power has a significant role. This power with unfathomable potentials is misused in such evil designs as black magic and aberrant intellectual pursuits as the invention of lethal weapons, etc. On the other hand it can be wisely directed to revitalise the body and mind and to outgrow their limitations to evolve to a superior state of being. The meaningful figure of Sri Ganesha shows the way.

Before examining the significance of the form of Sri Ganesha let us have a brief view of some new trends in modern biological investigations. This account may first appear as a deviation from our subject, yet it will help our study of the deep facts involved in Sri Ganesha's form, bringing the ancient insight in a refreshing harmony with the new vistas of modern biological thought.

A common factor in Indian philosophy and modern science is their evolutionary unfoldment of the universe and the phenomenon of life. Therefore, Indian philosophy is

broad enough to include in its range Darwin's views of organic evolution, although it transcends his mechanistic concepts, declaring that in the background of life's development there are spiritual values of a directional nature.

Survival of the Fittest vs. Survival of the Helpless

According to Darwin's views of evolution, the diverse species originated as a result of blind physical struggle, aided by the natural selection and the complexity of chances.

Darwin emphasises the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest as the mechanical factors that prompted evolution of life. But he overlooks a basic value exhibited by the phenomenon of life, which is very relevant in its continuity. There is a helpless phase in life — infancy. This phase is survived by beings not through struggle, but with the help of an inborn value expressed in life. This value — co-operation — contradicts struggle and is expressed through another universal value — motherly love. Against Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, this situation can be termed *survival of the helpless*. Had this value of co-operation not expressed in the innumerable manifestations of life, there could not have been a continuity in existence at all. This element of co-operation is more basic than the struggle for existence. Nature's provision of food begins even at the stage of the egg. This thoughtful provision for the developing embryo and later the motherly care for the helpless young are the basic necessities for survival and for the emergence of higher species through evolution. (This question of values and their scientific rel-

evance I am discussing in detail in a forthcoming book *Darwin and Gandhi*). Darwin's mind was too immersed in mechanistic views, to appreciate the subtle facts beyond mechanism.

Charles Darwin's

(1809-1882) concept of organic evolution had a liberating influence on human mind. It made people realise the self-evolving potency of Nature. This concept is no way in conflict with India's spiritual vision. It is understandable that the great scientist very much immersed in the physical mechanism of evolution could not grasp the greater principles behind the self-evolving faculty of Nature, as India's Rishis could. However,



awareness is dawning among the modern scientists of the deeper principles in life as is evident in the following words of Charles Sherrington, an eminent physiologist: "It is as if an Immanent Principle inspired each cell with the knowledge for carrying out a design."

Darwin, in his later years, lamented his loss of capacity to enjoy poetry particularly Shakespeare and many other

poets like Milton, Byron, Wordsworth and Shelly, of whom he was an ardent lover in his younger days. "I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me," he wrote. He regarded this as a personal loss and said that he would cultivate such tastes every week if he had to live over his life again. "My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of a large collection of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive."

On the otherhand, the Rishis, the mighty intellects who gave form to the Upanishads and Puraanas, cultivated these very sensitive parts of the brain and penetrated into the deeper secrets of life, and, like Nachiketus, the seeker in the Katha Upanishad, they were filled with joy! The tragic state of the atrophy of the higher tastes, of which Darwin says, is what the modern world is facing in a defective system of education. The world will turn to be a hell of crime and senseless destruction, if these sensitive areas of the brain are further allowed to be atrophied by today's grossly materialistic trends.

The stream of life in its progress from the primitive beings to man had to face formidable obstacles at different stages. Yet, the life-energy that throbbed in the lowly amoeba evolved to be the man of thinking, capable of surmounting every impediment. Although Darwin theorised that it was all the result of a blind physical struggle, the new biological perception tends to ask a question which will inspire the

modern mind to contemplate on the ancient vision of the directional values in life. Was there not a deeper and vital factor involved in the physical struggles of the lower forms of life in their evolution to the status of man? Such a question appears to arise in the following statement of the eminent biologist, J.B.S. Haldane :

"I imagine that associated with an evolving line may be some 'emergent' just as mind is associated with brain. Royce (1901) tried to give a concrete picture of such an emergent as a mind with a vast time-scale, and suggested that the intense feeling associated with reproduction was in that mind as well as our own. If there is an element of truth in such speculations, I question whether such an emergent should be regarded probably as mind like.... My suspicion of some unknown type of being associated with evolution is my tribute to its beauty, and to that inexhaustible queerness which is the main characteristic of the universe that has impressed itself on my mind during twentyfive years of my scientific work."

Goal-oriented Behaviour of Living Cells

Thus biology today starts suspecting the emergence of a mind-like guiding factor in the progress of evolution. If we suppose that such a goal-seeking principle is involved in evolution that transformed animal into man, again urging man for a further breakthrough, in what way can we best express this principle? These questions are relevant in our inquiry into the meaning of the figure of Sri Ganesha.

Modern biology is discovering many subtle factors involved in life, which it had not anticipated a century ago. It

finds unending new vistas for exploration. The electron microscope reveals a world of wonder of the basic life units. The genes within the thread-like chromosomes are leading microbiology to the realm of magic! Their forms, arrangements, constitution, etc., open stupendous undreamt of vistas for biologists .

Biological perception is now in a struggle for a breakthrough. Some biologists, who are trying to evolve a more comprehensive vision of evolution are of the view that natural selection forms only a part of the mechanism of evolution and to explain evolution by that alone is like explaining the whole by a part. Like Haldane several biologists today suspect the involvement of a goal-seeking factor in the phenomenon.

The mind-like 'emergent' about which Haldane talks, appears to come closer to the concept of *Praana*, which may have a subtle role in the selection and arrangement of the basic chemical components necessary for the appearance of various life forms and their evolution. The environment to which Darwin gave prime importance, may be playing only a catalytic role.

In organic evolution, the unicellular beings evolved into multicellular organisms with specialised organs. In between these two, there is a strange organism called the sponge. It is not actually a multicellular organism but an aggregation of unicellular protozoa; but there is no apparent external material element that keeps them together. Biologists have observed the presence of a goal-oriented field in this sea creature. If a live sponge is torn into pieces and passed

through a sieve into a container of sea water, the separated cells will reassemble themselves again to continue life as the sponge. Here we see the spontaneous action of a goal-seeking force; the goal is to keep them united. The union evidently involves a force of attraction. The latent power in each cell, as if having a will, surmounts the state of being separated and reunites the cells. We see the fulfillment of a goal by a directional energy.

Biology is also growing aware of the role of a directional urge in the formation of the organs in the body. Lyall Watson in this book *The Romeo Legend* has mentioned some revealing biological experiments that shed light on this.

In tissue culture experiments, scientists have cultivated isolated tissues from cells taken from rabbits, sheep, human beings, etc. If the cells are taken from an embryo, they will develop into appropriate structures as a muscle or a bone according to the part of the embryo from which the cells are taken.

L. Hayflick, a tissue culture expert at the Wistar Institute of Philadelphia, U.S.A., revealed from his experiments some special potentials of human embryonic cells.

He found that they could continue to multiply in isolation for fifty generations without their losing the power of organising themselves into definite shapes. After that the cells died as if they had lost some vital factor that directed their multiplication and ability to organise themselves into definite shapes. This limit varies from species to species and is known as the

Hayflick limit.

When the culture nears this limit of exhaustion, the cells tend to lose their identity. The specialised cells belonging to different organs tend to lose their distinctiveness as if they have lost their purpose and destiny. They turn into goalless self-duplicating building blocks which can develop in any direction if we could give them some new direction. They lose the original directional factor although they retain their genetic blue print, feed, multiply and divide till they reach Hayflick limit and die.

It was found that if these goalless cells were put back into contact with the body of the original donor, they would regain their 'purpose' and 'goal', but if some mutation had taken place in the exhausted cells, they will multiply without direction resulting in cancerous growths. However, if no such alteration has taken place in the cells, they will multiply towards a particular goal according to the circumstances in which they are placed. It was found that when specialized cells from the eye region of a frog were implanted in its stomach, they followed the purpose of the new organs, transforming themselves and multiplying into a new gut lining.

Thus biologists are becoming aware of the directional urge in the formation of the organs in the body. They also suspect the role of a directional urge in the origin of species through evolution, which may be realising its goal through the means of subtle and complex chemical actions, aided by environmental factors.

The eminent anthropologist Teilhard de Chardin's idea of a Noosphere points to the stupendous range of evolutionary possibility beyond the present day biological vision.

Matter and Consciousness

Our ordinary concept about matter is that it is something inert, and we believe that life originated by a mere accident from this 'dead' matter. However, modern physics tells us of the incredible movements of the sub-atomic particles revealing that the atom basically is not inert but a mysterious playground of energy. According to Indian philosophy, in the background of life energy and material energy there is *Praana*, the power that shows the characteristics of consciousness and energy, of which Max Planck, the nuclear physicist, seems to refer as the force of the Spirit "which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and concentrates them into minute solar systems of the atoms."

While the energy aspect of *Praana* is predominant in the material world, the consciousness aspect expresses through the living beings, reaching a high stage of intensity and manifestation in man. It must be the will of consciousness latent in matter that manifests as life, which by overcoming inertia and obstacles evolves to the stage of human consciousness.

Sri Ganesha :

The Spiritual Will of Evolution

Sri Ganesha represents the power of the intelligent Spirit, acting in the unfoldment of the world of life from the world of matter. There is a legend in the *Matsya Puraana*,

which tells that Sri Ganesha was born from the soil on the body of Goddess Paarvathi, the consort of Lord Shiva. (The significance of the legend is discussed in the following chapter).

Goddess Paarvathi is the *Shakthi* (Power) of Lord Shiva (Reality). From *Shakthi* originates *Moola Prakrithi*, the unmanifest Nature, with infinite potentials. *Moola Prakrithi* gives rise to the material universe, and from matter the living beings emerge with an inner urge to evolve and express higher stages of consciousness. (The origin of life from matter is indicated in the Bhagavad Geetha as '*Annaad-bhavanthi bhoothaani*' III-14—beings evolve from food substance.) Sri Ganesha represents the directional spiritual power that evolves consciousness from matter and expands it to the highest state of unconditioned freedom. The legend of his birth from the soil symbolises this theme.

India's sages discovered the directional urge in evolution ages before modern biologists could get a hint of it. Although these Master-Minds did not elaborate on the mechanical details of organic evolution, they broadly indicated the trend of it symbolically in the playful emergence of the incarnations of Lord Mahaa Vishnu (The word Vishnu means, one who is all-pervading) as fish (*Matsya*), tortoise (*Koorma*), boar (*Varaaha*), man-lion (*Narasimha*), the little man (*Vaamana*), man holding the axe (*Parashuraama*), the King (*Sri Raama*), man holding the plough (*Baalaraama*), and the supremely evolved man of perfection, Sri Krishna.

This not only indicates the organic evolutionary trend that culminated in man, but also the trend of man's social evolution and the greater evolutionary potential in him.

In the Puraanas and ancient books on medical sciences, there are significant hints on the secrets of evolution.

Thus the seers in their exploration discovered that it was the subtle spiritual energy of *Praana* that projected forth the material world and phenomenon of life. In beings below man, the urge to evolve works almost mechanically pushing the life-stream in an archetypal surge reaching a major breakthrough in man.

In him life blossoms into a highly conscious individuality. He arrives at a stage capable of consciously activating the potential spiritual energy for an evolutionary thrust forward to greater stages of freedom.

Man is not usually well aware of this possibility. He has to consciously direct his energies to integrate himself and evolve. Western philosophers like Nietzsche talk about the emergence of the superman, but having no adequate knowledge about the phenomenon of man, their utterances are vague and do not point out the way of this unfoldment. India's Rishis could.

How best can we symbolise by a figure the emergence of life from earth, the unfoldment of consciousness from matter and from primitive beings to the stage of man, and the way

for him to realise his potential of superconsciousness.

Sri Ganesha's form becomes significant.

His blissful form holds such a sublime theme that it gives scope for interpretation from several positive angles.

Saint Jnaneshwar, the youthful preceptor of the thirteenth century, begins his profound commentary on the Bhagavad-Geetha, thus:

*Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namah
Om Namah Sri Aadyaa
Veda pradipaadyaa
Jaya jaya swasamvedyaa
Aathmaroopaa*

"Om, Salutations to the auspicious First Cause, the very theme of the Vedas. Glory to Him who is the supreme Truth in supreme awareness of Himself."

In a splendid allegory Sri Jnaneshwar describes Sri Ganesha's garments, the four arms, the insignia, the tusk, the trunk, the ears and the sweet cake, *Modaka*, he holds, as the representations of the various branches of knowledge and spiritual wisdom that lead to the blissful awareness of the supreme Truth. He begins the commentary with the following words: "By the Grace of my Guru, Sri Nivirthinath, I prostrate in salutation to Sri Ganesha, who is the very form of *Pranavam*(ॐ), the first Cause of the universe."

With a masterly touch the seers co-ordinated their

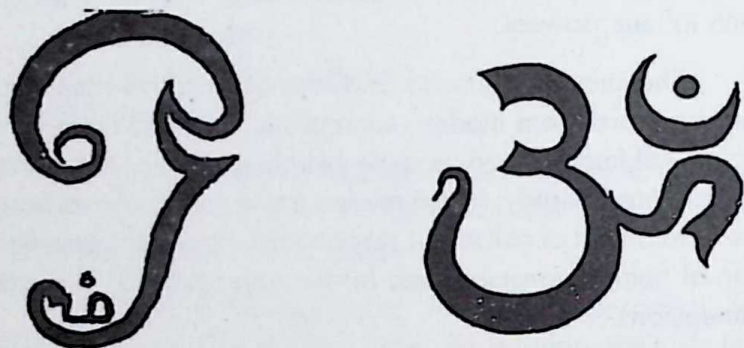
insights to convey profound messages. The Ganesha theme is an excellent example. Sri Ganesha represents the foremost initiating spiritual power at every stage. At the initial phase of the emergence of universe, he figuratively represents the primeval power of Brahman, symbolised by ॐ(OM). He is Ganapathi, Lord of the *Ganaas*, the subtle creative powers and elements that cause the universe of diversity. He is Vighneshwara, the Lord who clears all impediments, the very spiritual power that removes the obstacles in the way of life's progress from primitive forms to man. And in man He is the Presiding Deity of the evolutionary energy *Kundalini*, potent with infinite powers.

The strange figure of Sri Ganesha with his rat mount, that appears like a modern sur-realistic theme, is not a mere figment of imagination as some people would like to believe, but a supra-scientific theme related to the nature of evolution, the unfoldment of consciousness and the means of intensification of human consciousness for the expression of its divine dimensions.

Sri Muthuswami Deekshithar, the celebrated composer of Karnatic music and mystic, described the face of Sri Ganesha as *Pranava-swaroopo-vakrathundam*, the face with the tusk having the very form of *Pranavam*, the primeval vibration, the first creative throbbing of *Shakthi*, the power latent in Brahman. Lord Shiva symbolises Brahman and Goddess Paarvathi, the *Shakthi* (power) of Brahman. It is *Shakthi* that sets Shiva in a creative splendour, when the first Cause of the universe, emerges as the primeval vibration, *Pranavam* — ॐ. Sri Ganesha is the son of Lord Shiva and

Goddess Parvathi and he symbolically represents *Pranavam*.

Sanskrit and Tamil are two ancient languages of India with divergent origin; yet, both eminently project the same heritage evolved in the region. Their alphabets are very different, yet the letters which represent OM have a remarkable semblance. If the Sanskrit OM resembles the head of an elephant with a raised trunk, the Tamil OM has almost the same shape with a downward trunk. In fact, in all the major Indian languages, although the alphabets vary much, this resemblance is noticeable in the case of the letter that represents OM.



Pranavam symbol in Tamil and Sanskrit

From *Pranavam* evolved the universe; and the latent consciousness in matter sprang forth in the form of living beings finally reaching the human stage. The figure of Sri Ganesha along with his rat mount symbolises the whole theme. The Ganesha theme is a signpost for man showing him the way of directing the evolutionary energy within to reinforce and realise his superior potentials.

Let us examine the figure, which, as Saint Jnaneshwar points out, contains volumes of spiritual wisdom condensed into a form.

The Rat Mount

Among all the animals, the lowly rat is given the pride of place as the mount of Sri Ganesha. How can a huge figure with the head of an elephant and an equally big pot-belly choose the tiny rat for a mount? Rat and elephant — what a contrast! If a rat is made to sit on an elephant that is rational. Here an elephantine figure is supposed to sit calmly on a humble rat! Were those seers who conceived this strange combination, mere babes in their faculties of imagination?

But let us remember that they were the mighty intellects who conceived the sublime philosophy of the Upanishads that inspire even the most modern scientific minds of our times. They were the founders of the unique medical system, Ayurveda, and the most perfected systems of music and dance, most of which now receive world-wide attention. Modern mathematics rests on the foundation of their inventions. It is about their profound knowledge the French historian Victor Cousin, says: "When we read with attention the philosophical monuments of the Orient—above all those of India—we discover there many a truth so profound that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy."

Rat is an earthy animal. It is born in the womb of the earth. It lives in the holes of the earth; its body and head almost touch the earth. According to Indian philosophy

consciousness is latent in the very grains of the earth. It emerges into an active state first through the rudimentary life forms, and the intelligence finds its early expression in the lowest vertebrates. Rat is a suitable animal to represent this stage. It symbolises the primitive intelligence enveloped in ignorance and the resultant avariciousness, anxiety and restlessness.

On the other hand, the elephant is a symbol of strength and wisdom. Elephant is said to have a remarkable memory power and it possesses faculties of discrimination. There are examples of elephants, like the one named Guruvayoor Kesavan of the famed Sri Krishna temple of Guruvayoor in Kerala, which have even shown a remarkable sense of piety. The elephant's head is also the best symbol to express the power of removing any obstacle on the way. Its trunk can pick up a tiny pin as well as the heaviest road block. To suggest an expanded state of consciousness, its transcendental wisdom and power, an elephant's head is the most suitable symbol available—a symbol capable of evoking in the subconscious mind a sense of strength, expansion and reverence for the mighty power inherent in Nature. Although an elephant's head does not indicate the direction of physical evolution, it effectively serves to project the evolutionary theme of greater power and expansion.

Thus, two animals are adopted to symbolise two stages—one, the primitive state of consciousness and the other, the wisdom and power of expanded consciousness.

And it is the human body that connects these two

symbols. Consciousness expands through myriads of beings and acquires an intensive and powerful stature through the medium of the human body. Now its potential is immense. Man has the freedom to evolve and transform himself to a superman founding a super civilization. He is even capable of attaining supreme liberation transcending his biological limitations.

Sri Ganesha theme represents this forward movement of consciousness to expansion and freedom.

Yes, the huge figure of Sri Ganesa rests on the tiny rat—consciousness expanding to its mammoth dimensions from the humblest beginning.

Man is eager to know the unknown and it represents the a natural urge to embrace the still unattained reaches of consciousness. Throughout the evolution of life what was happening was not the evolution of consciousness, but the evolution of the equipment to express the higher planes of consciousness. Nature has given man the faculty to further evolve himself through his own effort.

The Way of Expansion

Nature demands a determined and disciplined psychological effort for man's evolutionary transformation. Man has certain characteristics of a rat and those of an elephant. Rat is a restless animal hectically running here and there, guided by its impulses. The elephant is a majestic animal with immense potential power, normally calm and composed.

Despite all the higher faculties dormant in him, man

often prefers to remain in the lower conscious level of the rat, as an impulsive, nervous, fearful being. But he has the capability for growing to the power and wisdom of a higher life. The choice is his.

The mighty figure of Sri Ganesha reminds us of this fact and shows the way of focussing the inner energies for the realisation of the greater possibilities.

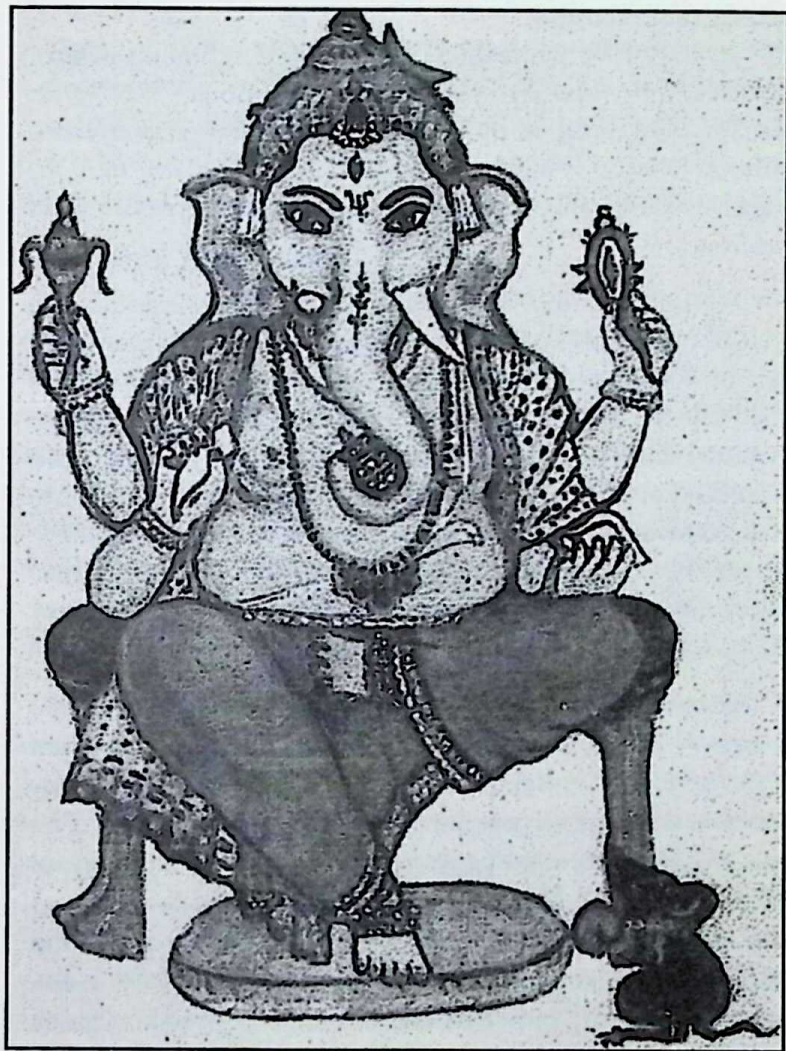
The Middle Path

Mark that in the usual figure of Sri Ganesha, one foot is depicted as touching the earth and the other lifted and placed on the other thigh.

This suggests that the middle path is the most suitable for human evolution as pointed out in the Bhagavad-Geetha. The foot touching the earth suggests man to live an active life on earth, while the other lifted leg exhorts him not to indulge too much in the earthy way of life. It reminds him to be mindful of the transitoriness and illusions of life and to be in communion with the eternal divine Reality within, for guidance to embrace the glory of spiritual freedom.

Pot Belly

Sri Genesha has a big pot - belly. He can hold in him anything. The entire universe is in him. No power can ever subjugate Him. This symbolises that one, who has attained spiritual composure, has mastered the world by achieving mastery over his own mind. Pleasure and pain have no undue impact on him. He is a *Sthitha Prajna* — a supremely balanced man. Even the practice to reach this conscious state frees one from great fear, says the Bhagavad-Geetha.



Painting by Beena Rajan

Paasa, the Noose

Many of the divine forms are depicted as having several hands holding certain symbols and weapons. This is an effective way adopted by the ancients to symbolise sublime spiritual principles and to suggest the ways for man to outgrow his ordinary state for realising his spiritual potentials and freedom.

The usual figure of Sri Ganesha has four hands. He holds in one of his hands a *Paasa*, the noose and in another hand an *Ankusha*, the hook. A noose is often used as a symbol to signify the nature of sense attachment. In *Sri Lalitha Sahasra-Naama*, a hymn on Divine Mother vibrant with spiritual power, the sense attachment and desires are depicted as having the form of a *Paasa*—*raagaswaroopā - paasa*. Uncontrolled senses entangle man in delusion and deflect him from the paths that lead him to a higher cultural and spiritual existence.

Here the noose is depicted as a devise in Sri Ganesha's hands. A noose is used as the reins to control a turbulent horse. Senses often behave like unbridled wild horses. They should be controlled by the reins of discrimination. The horses, if allowed to run wild, would overthrow the chariot and endanger the life of the charioteer. Unchecked senses exhaust and dissipate the inner energies, driving one to the doom of discontentment and frustration. As advised in the *Bhagavad-Geetha*, man must achieve control over his senses and concentrate whole-heartedly for the perfection of his work and through such self-culture evolve to his greater dimensions.

By controlling the senses and sublimating desires, if one perseveres with calm steadiness and determination in self-culture one will find the joy of inner expansion and freedom. Thus the noose in Sri Ganesa's hand symbolises the reins of discrimination by which man can control his senses and desires and concentrate his energies for spiritual freedom.

Ankusha, the Hook

Another hand holds a more powerful weapon, the *Ankusha*, the hook. If the noose controls the sense-horses, the hook is meant to tackle the powerful elephants that may go wayward—the emotions and passions. While uncontrolled senses may sap a man's vitality and make him inefficient and frustrated, unbridled emotions and passions may make him wild and blind. Under their sway, like a mad elephant, man may commit any atrocity causing havoc to others and inviting doom to himself. Therefore, he has to apply the painful hook on the negative passions and emotions for his evolution.

With constant practice to control the senses and emotions, the spiritual seeker experiences the joy of liberation from his lower nature. (The features of the anti-evolutionary lower nature of man that keep him stagnant or degrade him are given in the Bhagavad-Geetha in the sixteenth chapter, *Daivaasura-sampad-vibhaga-yoga* — the Yoga of Division between the Divine and Demoniactal Properties.) He becomes aware of the fact that his essential nature transcends the biological events of birth and death.

A serpent twines the body of Sri Ganesha diagonally

like a sacred thread. This suggests that in the spiritual seeker the potentials of the mighty *Kundalini* energy becomes expressive. The three strands of the sacred thread symbolise the *Ida*, *Sushmna* and *Pingala*, the subtle paths of the supra-physical energy along the spinal chord. The unawakened Kundalini power is often compared to a coiled up serpent in sleep.

The Broken Tusk

The two tusks represent the pairs of opposites, such as pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, etc. The right tusk of Sri Ganesha is depicted as broken. This suggests that the *Sthitha Prajna* — a supremely balanced man — is not a helpless victim trapped in between the fierce tusks of the world—the pairs of opposites. With conscious effort he has broken their stifling grip on him and is free. Ganesha holds the broken piece of the tusk in his right hand like a writing stylus. This symbolises the creative powers acquired by a man of spiritual wisdom.

The right side according to Indian philosophy represents the changeless Reality — the supreme Brahman, and the left, the creative power *Shakthi*, which is the cause of the universal phenomena of ceaseless changes. It is the right tusk that is broken. This indicates that a *Sthitha Prajna* is well established in his eternal divine essence, Brahman. The unbroken left tusk symbolises that he lives an active and elevated life fulfilling his role in society like the sages who shine as beacon lights in the path of the evolving mankind.

Modaka, the Delicious Cake

One who practices this evolutionary self-discipline truly enjoys life, because it gives him the opportunity of self-unfoldment to experience the greater dimensions of freedom. He enjoys the real sweetness of living, symbolised by the delicious cake, the *Modaka* — which Sri Ganesha holds in hand. The word *Modaka* means, that which gives joy. It reminds man that the Bliss of Eternity is accessible to him, and it is in his own hands. He cannot find it outside him; it is in him. The rat is also depicted as holding a small cake and looking at the visage of its Master, as if seeking his permission to enjoy it. What the rat holds represents the earthy joys, which an evolving man may not completely eschew; he places them under the control of his higher self. His natural impulses are not suppressed with force, but intelligently sublimated with the application of will and discrimination. Thus, a spiritual seeker enjoys the temporal joys without causing harm to others while he expands his realm of spiritual awareness that transcends the temporal and brings him lasting spiritual happiness.

The Third Eye

The higher faculties and freedom of the supremely evolved man is symbolised by the third eye between the eyebrows of Sri Ganesha. Even while he lives on earth he dwells in Eternity. He is one with Sri Ganesha — the One in all.

Thus life, which is latent in the earth and which finds its early expressions in the lowly beings, finally reaches its crowning glory in the Supreme Consciousness that unfolds in man.

The Crown

How splendid is the crown of Sri Ganesha! The sparkling jewels shine like stars. The crown represents the wondrous universe, the very crown of Reality.

Buddhi and Siddhi

In his highest aspect Sri Ganesha, he is One Supreme without a second — a celebate without a consort. In another aspect he is depicted as having two consorts — Buddhi and Siddhi. The word Buddhi means discriminative intellect, and Siddhi, attainment of superior consciousness. How meaningful every description is!

The evolving man will be blessed by both these consorts; he will develop discriminative intelligence and attain superior consciousness. Both the consorts have off spring. To Buddhi was born Kshema — wellbeing and prosperity, and to Siddhi, Labha, the attainment of a higher state of being. He who has realised his oneness with Reality lacks nothing, having attained the inner fullness.



Painting from an old astrological treatise

THE LEGENDS

Meaningful Legends

SEVERAL Puraanas, the spiritual epics, like the *Shiva Puraana*, *Linga Puraana*, *Ganesha Puraana*, *Mudgala Purana* and some other epics contain legends about Sri Ganesha's different manifestations and their missions.

The Puraanas are a blend of highly imaginative stories and subjective truths. They are like abstract paintings, which have a subtle breakaway stance from the common vision, and deflect human thought from its ordinary grooves, thus enabling it to reach for the extraordinary. They were evolved by the seers to inculcate life-refining values in the common man, while helping the intellect to transcend the limitations of the usual conditioned thought.

The Rishis gave form to the highly philosophical treatises, the Upanishads with a minimum touch or no touch of story element. Thus, the Upanishads help those who have an intellectual orientation capable of grasping subjective truths, to break the conditioned shell of the intellect for exploring into the unconditioned Reality. And for the majority, who cannot initially comprehend discussions of an abstract nature, the Rishis composed the Puraanas, which bring the Divine closer

to the level of ordinary human concepts, thus lending a helping hand to the mind in its ascension to transcendental heights.

The Upanishads open the path of knowledge; the Puraanas lead up the path of devotion. While the higher knowledge acquired imparts a texture of humility to the seeker it instills in him a devotional reverence for the higher dimensions of the Self, which he is trying to embrace through the path of knowledge. On the other hand, those who follow the path of devotion, adoring the Supreme within, come closer to the blissful Reality enjoying the sweetness of an emotional involvement. And as they take every step forward to reach the loving embrace of Reality, their awareness and knowledge of their object of adoration naturally increase.

Thus the seeker on the path of knowledge will be supplemented with a devotional fervour, while one in the path of devotion naturally acquires a greater perception and knowledge, if the devotion is not hamstrung by fanatical attitudes. Both the paths lead to the same goal — liberation from the biological conditioning and expansion to the freedom of Reality.

A reader of the Puraanas can observe that often a very earthy story element on reaching its climax blossoms itself in fine poetic language, into a few stanzas of sublime and inspiring philosophical ideas on the Absolute Truth, naturally lifting the mind of the reader from the ordinary to the transcendental. While the Upanishads make their pilgrimage

in the realm of lofty ideas, the Puraanas generally bring down the Divine to the world of ordinary human beings in order to help the common man to refine and sublimate his emotions and passions and elevate himself to the divine dimensions within.

A deeper study of the legends in the Puraanas would reveal that they throb with superior knowledge sugar-coated in the story element. Just as a chemical equation may appear as mere meaningless scratches to some people, these stories may be of no consequence to many. But a serious student will find them unfolding astounding vistas of meaning. They will see the sublime facets of cosmic and human situations in these stories, which fundamentally dwell on the evolutionary struggle within man — the war between the negative and the positive aspects of the mind in its relentless urge to expand to the freedom of Supreme Existence.

Pranavam (ॐ) and Sri Ganesha

There is a revealing legend in the *Skanda Puraana* about the relation between the *Pranavam* sign and the form of Sri Ganesha.

Once Goddess Paarvathi, consort of Lord Shiva, was enjoying the marvellous works of art in an art gallery in Kailasa, the abode of the divine couple. When the Goddess reached in front of a huge painting of ॐ (OM), the *Pranavam* sign, which has the semblance of an elephant's head with a raised trunk, she stood there for quite some time enjoying its artistic excellence. Thereupon the divine form of Sri Ganesha

took birth from that great symbol of Pranavam or *Sabda Brahman*.

Brahman, the causeless Cause, with infinite potentials expresses Its *Shakthi* (the power or will supreme of the Absolute) as a first vibrant cause in a *leela* (sport) of creation. This subtlest vibratory state is represented by the symbol ॐ. This is known as the sign of *Pranavam* or *Sabda Brahman*. The word *sabda* signifies the vibratory state. *Sabda Brahman* means Brahman in Its aspect as the first causal vibration. It is the first expression of the infinite possibilities of Brahman in a seed form. And from this seed arises all the forms of conscious and non-conscious energies by permutation and combination which give expression to the manifested universe of infinite diversity. Because of its seed character *Pranavam* is also known as the *Beejaaksharam*, the seed syllable. Beeja means seed.

In the chantings of *Manthras* — the spiritually potent invocations — of all the religions originated in India, this seed syllable is used as a prefix to enhance the power of each *Manthra*. Sri Ganesha receives the same supreme importance like ॐ, occupying the pride of place in the beginning of all auspicious actions. As the above-mentioned legend indicates, Sri Ganesha's figure is a dynamic representation of the Power of *Brahman*.

The One Reality, Brahman, in Its creative *leela* (sport) assumes a plorisation as Two — *Param-Aathma* and *Paraa-Shakthi*, the Soul Supreme and the Power Supreme. These two aspects of Brahman are figuratively symbolised as Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi (The Power Supreme has three

aspects: Power of Knowledge (*Jnaana Shakthi*), Power of Will (*Ichhaa Shakthi*) and Power of Action, (*Kriyaa Shakthi*). Lord Ganesha as the son of the divine couple, figuratively represents ॐ, which is the seed and directive force behind every form of energy in the universe. He is Ganapathi, the Lord of the *Ganas*, the powers responsible for the expression and dissolution of the material universe. Therefore, He is invoked first, for the successful fulfilment of every venture, mundane or spiritual.

The Trend of Evolution told in a Story

Another story about the birth of Sri Ganesha is in the *Matsya Purana*. It highlights the evolutionary theme of life emerging from matter, evolving and reaching the stage of man to achieve the supreme Freedom.

One day when Goddess Paarvathi, was about to take a bath, she rolled some mud that had stuck to her body and with it created a boy. He was instructed to stand guard and not to allow any one to enter the pond where she would be bathing. Lord Shiva came there and the boy stopped him, eventhough his identify was revealed to the boy. It resulted in a clash and Lord Shiva severed the head of the young guard.

Knowing this Goddess Paarvathi was drowned in grief. To console his consort Lord Shiva quickly brought an elephant's head and joined it to the headless body of the boy. The divine couple adopted the revived one as their son. They made them the Lord of all the *Ganas*, the forces that regulate the universe.

To those who are not familiar with the symbolic language of the Rishis, who compressed profound knowledge in such legends, the above story may appear frivolous.

In some Puraanas, in certain contexts the inner meaning of such legends is also explained, giving a clue to the reader on how to open these treasure-houses of knowledge. An exposition in the *Puranjanoo-paakhyaanam* section in the *Bhaagavatha Puraana* is one such excellent example.

In this legend Goddess Paarvathi symbolises the primeval Nature (*Moola Prakrithi*) latent with infinite creative possibilities. From her body—from matter—life emerges and evolves ultimately giving rise to the human being in whom consciousness assumes the character of human mind with its wonderful faculties. The Sanskrit word *Manushya* (man) means the being in whom the mind becomes predominantly expressive. A conditioned state of Supreme Consciousness, human mind stands in between the two poles of Reality—Nature and Supreme Consciousness. Here the legend presents the human mind as a guard who stands in between Goddess Paarvathi (the creative energy pole of Reality) and Lord Shiva (the pure consciousness pole of Reality).

Goddess Paarvathi goes for a bath instructing the guard not to allow anyone to go near her. This indicates that Mother Nature while immersed in her creations is even forgetful of her own higher aspect, the unconditioned Reality—Lord Shiva. However, the boy who has evolved from her body—man—is potentially capable of realising the Truth through his further evolution. Man is destined to embrace Divine Consciousness.

And God is eager to manifest Himself through man, as symbolised by Lord Shiva's coming near to the boy. Yet the human mind has a tendency to resist its own expansion as it is strongly conditioned and bound by the fields of the senses. The conditioned mind of man stands in between and denies such union in him of *Prakrithi* and *Purusha*, the supreme Divine Energy and supreme Consciousness which would result in his total freedom. This resistance of the mind to the inner natural urge to embrace Reality results in a major conflict in the human condition.

The boy resisting Lord Shiva, and the ensuing clash between them indicate this condition. Lord Shiva severing the head of the boy symbolises the final liberation of the human mind from its conditioning to become one with the Supreme Consciousness. The boy's resurrection acquiring the head of an elephant is symbolic of the power and freedom of the transformed state of consciousness.

There are other versions about the birth of Sri Ganesha in some other Puraanas. They all shed light from different angles on the deeper aspects of Truth.

The Destruction of Thripuraasuras

Lord Shiva slaying the three demons, Thripuraasuras, is another legend rich in symbolic meaning related to human evolution and freedom.

Lord Shiva once started a terrific war against the three demons, the Thripuraasuras. When the war reached its pitch, the axle of Lord Shiva's chariot broke. Unable to move,

he became practically a prisoner in the fort of the powerful demons. Now, Lord Shiva contemplated on his own son, Lord Ganesha, who wards off all obstacles. Thereupon, he could surmount the obstacle and destroy the Thripuraasuras.

Lord Shiva is the supreme Reality and is supremely free. He is immanent in the whole universe and in all beings. As living beings exist in different stages of conditioning, they are oblivious of the supremely free Essence in them. Man is in such an evolved state that he is capable of undoing this conditioning and experience his supreme freedom. But the Essence (Lord Shiva) in him having been influenced by the human conditioning, has only a very faint recollection of his freedom. Yet the evolutionary trend in man is towards recovering this Freedom. All human efforts, whether material or spiritual, are in fact unconscious or conscious strivings for this.

It is said in the story that Lord Shiva in his war with the demons forgot at first to invoke Sri Ganesha, his son. This symbolises the fact that man, deluded by his senses, is in a constant struggle to find lasting happiness and freedom by material means alone. However he tries, however he struggles he fails. The axle of his life's chariot breaks. Without invoking his spiritual impulses and evolving from within, human striving for individual and social well-being misfires and brings in misery and pain. It is often in a state of hopelessness man is prompted to search for his inner spiritual resources and realises the immense wealth of power within. When he starts invoking these resources, he discovers an infinite blissful dimension within, the source of all happiness and freedom. Now the

struggle takes the right course.

According to Indian philosophy, the One in Its creative sport first projects the *Moola Prakrithi*, the unmanifest field of Primeval Nature with infinite creative potential. Primeval Nature has three important conditioning modes or qualities, which are *Sathva* (harmony), *Rajas* (motion) and *Thamas* (inertia). Influenced by these qualities, the One appears as many. Under the predominating influence of *Thamas* man remains in an uncultured and unrefined state. When *Rajas* predominates he will be over-active, especially in pursuits of temporary pleasures and in avaricious accumulation of material possessions, without heeding for the values of life, which ultimately brings sufferings to himself and others. Influenced by the *Sathva* quality he will be refined, considerate and will perform his duties aiming at the general welfare of all. Man's individual and social evolution depends on a constant effort to lessen the influence of *Thamas* and *Rajas* and to cultivate the quality of *Sathva*. Creative educational methods aiming at the promotion of *Sathva* qualities will lead to an evolved society of superior human beings.

Man has even the potentiality of making a breakthrough to the absolute freedom of Brahman. For this he has to transcend even the quality of *Sathva* which is one of the conditioning qualities of Nature. When man transcends *Sathva*, he is one with the Supreme.

In the legend, Lord Shiva represents the supreme Reality. The three demons are the three conditioning qualities of Nature. The human body is the fortress of the three demons

in which Lord Shiva is imprisoned. When man transcends these three conditioning modes of Nature, he is liberated from the biological states of birth and death. The Supreme Reality in man — Lord Shiva — slays the three demons — Thripuraasuras — and regains the Supreme Freedom — the evolutionary culmination of the human phenomenon.

Such legends keep on reminding man that human life is not to be wasted in ordinary pleasures, in pomp and vainglory, in killing and destroying, but it is a potential field for evolutionary expansion to ever greater freedom, which is the ultimate human destiny.

You are Greater than Your Possessions

Another thought-provoking legend in the Sri Ganesha lore exhorts man not to be proud of his material wealth and power but to expand to enrich himself with the lasting wealth of self-awareness.

Puraanas describe Kubera as the wealthiest person in the universe. He became very proud of his material possessions and wanted to show his pomp and power to all. After much thought he found out the way to do this. He decided to invite Lord Ganesha, who is worshipped by all, for a sumptuous feast.

Thus Kubera succumbed to the common weakness widespread in society — the vein craze to show off by giving ostentatious feasts and presents to those who already have enough, unmindful of the misery around and the social responsibility for alleviating it. Sri Ganesha is the Lord of the

Ganas; he is the source of all that is manifested in the universe. Therefore, if a feast is given to him, the whole universe would come to know about it and honour Kubera as the wealthiest — so thought Kubera.

Sri Ganesha was invited. He promptly arrived on the appointed day. He was seated on a mat. The delicacies were served on a big plantain leaf. The pot-bellied guest began consuming everything quickly. Whatever was served was consumed in no time. Kubera rose to the occasion and supplied loadful of eatables. But before long the richest man of the universe was running short of supply. There was nothing more to satisfy Sri Ganesha's hunger, which was assuming fiery proportions. Seeing that there was no further supply of eatables, Sri Ganesha gulped down all the vessels in front of him. Then he ran into every room in the huge palace and ate whatever he could find there. Still not satisfied, he devoured the entire palace itself. And there was nothing left, except Kubera himself. Ganesha was about to lay his hands on Kubera when the latter took to his heels. Ganesha ran after him, to catch him.

For the first time in his life, Kubera realised that his immense wealth was of no consequence and that it could not save him. Then the idea of a saving superior Power dawned in him. Chanting the sacred names of Lord Shiva he ran followed by the elephant-faced little figure. Kubera reached Kailasa, the mountainous abode of Lord Shiva, prostrated before him and prayed for protection.

Smilingly the Lord asked Ganesha to halt and gave him a handful of beaten rice. That handful was enough to satisfy the hunger of the Lord of all powers. Not only that, everything Ganesha had consumed came out of his mouth — from the place to the vessels and they reverted themselves to their original places. When his material wealth was exhausted and his reliance on it shattered and pride subdued, the thought of the divine dawned in Kubera and that awareness ultimately saved him.

Here Sri Ganesha symbolises the tremendous power of the all-consuming Time. The avaricious nature of man prompts him to use all his energies in a mad craze for accumulating wealth, which he feels would give him everlasting security. In such a mood he forgets his fellow beings and his higher possibilities and greater destiny. And then he invites Time for the great feast, which consumes everything. How relevant this story is in our times! Even people who are supposed to be very intelligent do no better than Kubera and invite doom for themselves.

Wealth, health, scholarship, etc., often keep the human mind confined and complacent — with the mistaken notion that they are an end in themselves, forgetting that they are only the means for a smooth expansion of human life. The lasting spiritual dimensions are relegated as of no consequence. Years slip by and man discovers that many things that he had cherished and in which he had put all his faith, have already been consumed by Time. Kubera could at least

discover it before it was too late and correct himself. But many people do not. They allow their receptive faculties to the greater dimensions to become dull. The result is a life of constant disharmony and mental pressure.

But some others are more fortunate. As happened to Kubera, turning points may occur in the life of even a blindly material-oriented person. He may discover the consoling truth that there is an intensive, eternal inner dimension in life and that he can expand beyond his body. The transformation brought about by the new awareness is sometimes astounding. There are instances of even incurable diseases vanishing when man gets an access to the dimensions of the Spirit. A new man of greater vision is born.

Those who cultivate from the young age the awareness of the inner realm are fortunate. As the years pass by, they will experience an expansion. The petals unfold themselves, the flower blooms with all fragrant freshness, a fruit is born and it slowly gets filled with sweetness, a new flavour and freshness. Those who do not try to discover their greater dimensions are like non-fruit bearing flowers, which simply wither away. Others enjoy every phase of life and the new freshness it assumes at every stage. Life does not delude them; death does not perturb them.

A Lesson in Realisation to Child Ganesha

There is a very humane story as to how the Divine Mother taught child Ganesha a lesson on the unity of all life, cultivating in him love for all beings.

Once child Ganesha was playing with a cat. He playfully pulled its tail and rolled the poor animal in mud causing it pain and discomfort, before letting it go. When tired he ran to his mother Goddess Paarvathi and sat on her lap for being caressed. But he found that his mother was in a very sad mood. He looked at her face and to his dismay he found that she was writhing in pain. And he found that her body was smeared with mud and there were several scratches. He asked her about the cause of her agony and how she got herself smeared in mud. She lovingly told him that it was all caused by the unkind behaviour of Ganesha himself. "O Mother, how can you utter such unkind words to me who loves you so deeply," Ganesha protested, "I have never done this to you." "You alone did this," said the Goddess, "When you pulled my tail and rolled me in mud, you were very unkind to me, and you had no love for me." Ganesha quickly understood the point. "Now I understand, Mother," Ganesha said, "Harming any being is harming you."

Puraanas bring down the divine to the very texture of human emotions in order to help man to sublimate them and elevate himself to his divine nature. There is an amusing story how child Ganesha ended a misunderstanding between his parents. Once he found that his parents, Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi were in an unreconcilable mood. Then he requested to them for a kiss each one on one of his cheeks simultaneously. As they came close to him and kissed him from both sides, he quickly withdrew causing the parents kiss each other. There ended the semblance of any quarrel.

Jnaana Pazham, the Fruit of Knowledge

The means to know the Truth lies in the effort to know oneself. He who knows the Source of his origin knows everything. There is a legend in the Ganesha lore that highlights this profound truth.

One day the great sage Naarada reached the icy heights of Mount Kailas, the legendary abode of Lord Shiva and his consort Goddess Paarvathi. He offered them a pomegranate fruit. Their sons, Sri Subrahmanya and his brother, Sri Ganesha desired to have the luscious fruit.

But this is not an ordinary fruit. It is the fruit with pearls of Supreme Wisdom, the fruit that imparts the sweetness of absolute Self Awareness. It is a Whole by itself and cannot be divided. Therefore, the divine couple declared that the one who took a round of the infinite universe and returned to them first would be eligible for the fruit. Immediately Sri Subrahmanya began his great journey on his speedy pea-cock mount and disappeared like a lightning into the depths of infinity. What can Sri Ganesha do! His mount is the slow rat who has to carry a big figure with a pot-belly. But Ganesha was not nonplussed. He just went round his parents and extended his palm for the fruit. "Have you went round the universe," amusingly queried the divine couple. Ganesha was quick to reply them enquiringly, "What else is the universe other than you both, my own Source?" "O You are the eligible one for this fruit," said they and presented him the fruit.

When Subrahmanya returned after his round of the infinite universe, he could not believe his own eyes. Ganesha,

who had gone nowhere, has earned the fruit! The divine couple told him what had happened. Sri Subrahmanya then understood that the one who comes to know the Supreme Truth as one's own inmost Being naturally gets the Fruit of Supreme Wisdom.

"If so I am going for penence to gain that Supreme Wisdom," said Subrahmanya. A legend in Tamil says that Lord Shiva told him then '*palam nee*', which means, 'Thou art that fruit'. It is said that the renowned pilgrim centre, Palani, in South India, with a temple dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya on a hilltop, derived its name from this advice *palam nee*, and it is believed to be the place where Sri Subrahmanya did penance to realise the Truth, *palam nee* — '*Thath Thvam Asi*' — Thou art That.

Knowledge of the manifold mechanisms, actions and reactions, of the entire material universe cannot give man an answer to his eternal quest: 'Who or What am I?' This is what is symbolised by Sri Subrahmanya's rounding of the whole universe, and yet not being eligible to receive the 'fruit'. Rabindranath Tagore so well points out this human situation in *Gitanjali* when he says that the pilgrim after knocking at all the available doors outside, returns at last to knock at the door of his own heart.

A Quiz

An interesting story in Vidyakara's *Subhashita Rathnaakaram* reveals the immanence of the Shiva-Shakthi principle in the whole universe.

Lord Shiva has an aspect called *Arthanaareeshwara*, the half male and half female form — a combined form of Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi.

Sri Subrahmanya asks his brother Sri Ganesha a very enigmatic question: "When half of our father and half of our mother join together to form *Arthanaareeshwara*, what happens to their other halves?"

Sri Ganesha answers : "The other half of father has transformed into all that has an immanent male principle in the universe, and the other half of mother, into whatsoever that has the female principle."

The Moon Humbled

There is a belief that if one looks at the moon on the night of *Chathurthi*, the fourth day after the New Moon (an auspicious day for the worship of Sri Ganesha) it might cause one to get a bad name. Possibly the ancients had possessed the knowledge of some subtle adverse influence of the moon on the human mind that day. The following amusing legend which discourages people from looking at the moon that night has also come into vogue.

One night, after a sumptuous feast, Ganesha was returning home on the back of his rat mount. On a small ridge in a field the rat slipped, and the heavy figure on its back fell down. And the moon, who witnessed this funny incident, could not control his burst of laughter. The angry Ganesha cursed the moon that anyone who looked at the moon would acquire ill fame. Thereafter, there was no one to look at the moon and appreciate his beauty. The repentant moon prayed

to Sri Ganesha for forgiveness and pleaded release for him from the effect of the curse. And Sri Ganesha, who could be easily pleased, restricted the effect of the curse only for the night of the *Chathurthi*. Incidentally the birthday of Sri Ganesha is celebrated on a *Chathurthi*. The *Chathurthis* after the Full Moon are celebrated as *Sankatahara Chathurthi*, a day with a special power to remove suffering. Sri Ganesha is worshipped in the evening on such days to cross over impediments.

Even this amusing story has a deep symbolic meaning. Moon is considered as having an influence on human mind and intellect. Sri Ganesha is the Presiding Deity of man's spiritual evolution. It is indeed an adventurous pursuit and one may slip and fall at the ridges of one's mental states. Yet, one has to get up and proceed. However, the superficial aspects of mind with its ordinary reasoning will cause these slips and may mock at the spiritual quest as an illusory pursuit; but before long when the evanescent powers and charms of the mind lose their relevance, the superficial ego may realise its mistakes and will be humble enough to see the greater realms of harmony the spiritual pursuit leads to. When the intellect becomes aware of the Divine, it acquires a transcendental freshness.

There is a legend on how Sri Ganesha outwitted the demon king Ravana, who had obtained a powerful *Shiva Linga* idol, from Lord Shiva Himself, and got it installed in Gokarna, in Karnataka, for the larger benefit of people. Likewise, there is another story of his getting installed a Vishnu idol passed on by Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, at Srirangam, in Tamilnad.

An interesting story about the origin of Kaveri, a great river in South India, tells that Sage Agsthya, through his intense penance, received the river Kaveri in a potential form in his *kamandalu* (the water-pot carried by ascetics). The sage was so much happy to have the holy Kaveri beside him that he forgot to release the waters for the benefit of mankind. Then there occurred a devastating famine in South India. The drought affected millions; and Devendra, the king of gods, invoked Sri Ganesha for help. Assuming the form of a crow, Sri Ganesha flew to the deep forests in the Sahya mountains where Sage Agasthya was immersed in meditation in his Ashram. The crow sat on the top of the *kamandalu* placed beside the sage and tilted it. The joyous Kaveri poured out, assumed huge proportions and watered the plains bringing succour to the teeming millions.

There is a beautiful legend in *Bhaargava Puraana* which highlights the essential oneness of different forms of Gods. One day, in Kailasa Goddess Paarvathi was celebrating the birthday of Lord Ganesha. On that occasion, Vishvadeva, a great devotee on Lord Vishnu happened to come to Kailasa. The Divine Mother invited him for the feast. He informed the Goddess that he used to take food only after getting the vision (*darshan*) of Lord Mahaavishnu. Lord Ganesha who was there, immediately transformed himself into Lord Vishnu and gave him the vision. This legend points out the fact that all earnest spiritual pursuits, though there are diverse paths, would lead to the same Truth.

Innumerable are the legends of the Ganesha lore that are not only thought-provoking to the serious enquires of Truth, but also entertainingly instructive to the common man.



Sri Siddhi Vinaayaka in Srimad Ananteshwara-
Vinayaka Temple, Madhur

WORSHIP

Devotional Worship

Brahman, the Supreme, is the central Cause of all diversity. In essence, everything is Brahman, and there can be nothing outside it. From this sublime standpoint, Advaita philosophy considers any name and form that reminds man of the transcendental glory of the Supreme as sacred and worshipful. In the *Harinaama Keerthanam*, a superb hymn on Lord Vishnu, composed in Malayalam by the philosopher-poet Thunchath Ezhuthachchan, it is said: "Among the crores and crores of Thy sacred names, there is none that is irrelevant." This is the rationale behind the pantheistic character of India's spiritual vision. Indian philosophy beholds the One as the many, and the many as the One.

This approach to sublime Truth through diverse paths, enjoying the special characteristics of each path, according to the psychological disposition of the seeker, highlights the freedom of enquiry which is the basic characteristic of India's spiritual pursuit. There is no conflict between unity and diversity, because diversity is an expression of the supreme unity. That is why great saints and exponents of Advaita philosophy, from Sri Adi Shankaracharya to Sri Narayana Guru, composed soul-stirring hymns on several divine forms.

Communion with the Eternal

Human brain, is equipped to receive diverse impulses from the external world; and it has also subtle receptors that can bring it in communion with the powerful spiritual realm within. This communion attunes human life with the superior harmony of the universe.

Members of the animal kingdom below man live almost an impulsive life, controlled by the external environment, although we can notice sometimes the expressions of a sense of higher values even among them. Man is subject both to the powerful pulls of the environment and to the gentle promptings of his superior evolutionary possibilities. As the English poet Dryden says:

Men are the children of a larger growth.

But man often chooses himself to be controlled by the vagaries of the environment instead of availing his finer faculties for communion with his higher Self. The receptors in his brain meant to imbibe the higher messages are blunted. The doors that open the mind to greater truths are closed. (This is what Darwin mentions as the atrophy of the brain on which the higher tastes depend.) The ancient explorers of Truth devised means to help us activate these faculties and experience the soothing breeze of solace, power and the larger vision it brings. A balanced mental approach in its relation with both the external world and the inner spiritual realm will evolve man to the greater dimensions of freedom.

One-sided involvement with the external world and exclusive dependence on the material side for 'security' keeps

man in the thralldom of the environment. It turns him into a mindless bundle of animal reactions — anxious, fearful and suspicious. This human condition is well reflected in the following lines in a letter the author received from a reader in a prosperous western country: "We are a very fast-paced, anxiety-ridden country, and people need to learn how to slow down and relax. We may have a lot of economic advantage, but there is little peace of mind and true happiness here."

Devotional Outlook

Cultivation of devotion, if it is not influenced by fanatical sentimentalism, is a scientific means to this communion with Reality. It is not a slavish and mindless surrender as some people would like to picture it. Devotion is a sensitive means to activate the spiritual receptors in our being. It is a rational and practical way to outgrow the limitations of our ordinary ego-centric personality and attain the greater freedom of our divine Self. During devotional piety, the conditioned human intelligence shedding its self-imposed limitations, expands in tune with the all-powerful Super Intelligence leading to a miraculous spiritual transformation.

Devotion is love — love for the Supreme Fact in us. Whether we love the formless Supreme or earnestly conceive it by a form, the result is the same — invoking the divine grace to elevate life to its blissful dimensions. For many, an idol is an effective means to cultivate devotion. One is not worshipping the stone or metal of the idol as such, (as some people illogically feel), but the divine Essence represented by it. The Advaitic vision can well see that the Essence is the same

whether it is in a block of stone or in a living being.

The seers developed a very co-ordinated spiritual technology to activate the aspects of the power of the Divine in idols and installed them in temples to help man's communion with the Supreme. They conceived suitable symbolic forms that can hold and embody the aspects of the divine power. For instance, when a devotee worships the blissful figure of Sri Ganesha that symbolises the obstacle-removing grace of Brahman, he is activating the same divine aspect immanent in him and in the universe, which positively influences and modifies the texture of his life. Reading of sacred books and hymns, *japa* (devotional repetition of sacred Names and *Manthras*) have a life-refining and reinforcing spiritual effect. Temples form an effective medium to bring man close to the Divine.

Human beings have several desires and aspirations. Appropriate actions to achieve them, if they do not go against *Dharma*, the laws for achieving higher harmony, are conducive to man's spiritual evolution. The phenomenal universe is influenced by the three binding modes or qualities of Nature, *sathva* (harmony), *rajas* (motion) and *thamas* (inertia). There will be a natural impact of these qualities in human life. The seers advise us to overcome the adverse effects of *thamas* and *rajas* and increase the quality of *sathva* by invoking the appropriate divine powers which would help one realise the aspirations, in harmony with *Dharma*. That is the way for human life to progress towards its ultimate fulfilment.

Fifty-one Manifestations of Sri Ganesha

The sages discovered that every vibrant aspect of Nature has a divine characteristic, as fundamentally everything is divine. All the vibratory powers of Nature emerge from the subtlest vibration, represented by ॐ. Their permutation and combination give rise to the infinite phenomena of the universe. The 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are a symbolic representation of the major vibratory states originating from the primeval ॐ

(The formless Reality behind the vibrant alphabet and the Form-Word-Power expressed by the alphabet of Reality are to be understood as complementary, not contradictory. This is the perfect, integrated religious view of Indian philosophy. The profound Manthra Science, developed by the ancient sages is based on this understanding. It is this Form-Word-Power of Reality that is cultivated for commonweal and preserved in temples.)

Sri Ganesha, who represents ॐ, is considered to have 51 manifestations, corresponding to the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, and symbolising the divine powers of these vibrant states.

Thirty-Two Important Forms

Of these 51 forms 32 are considered as very important aspects of Sri Ganesha for invocation to realise certain aspirations. The following are the names of these forms:
1. Baala Ganapathi 2. Tharuna Ganapathi 3. Bhaktha

Ganapathi 4. Veera Ganapathi 5. Shakthi Ganapathi
 6. Dwija Ganapathi 7. Siddhi Ganapathi (Pingala
 Ganapathi) 8. Uchchishta Ganapathi 9. Vighnaraaja
 Ganapathi 10. Kshipra Ganapathi 11. Heramba
 Ganapathi 12. Lakshmi Ganapathi 13. Mahaa Ganapathi
 14. Vijaya Ganapathi (Bhuvanasha Ganapathi) 15. Nriitha
 Ganapathi 16. Udhwa Ganapathi 17. Eaykaakshara
 Ganapathi 18. Vara Ganapathi 19. Thryakshara
 Ganapathi 20. Kshipra Prasaada Ganapathi 21. Haridra
 Ganapathi 22. Eaykadantha Ganapathi 23. Shrishti
 Ganapathi 24. Uddhanda Ganapathi 25. Rnamochaka
 Ganapathi 30. Yoga Ganapathi 31. Durgaa Ganapathi
 32. Samkata Harana Ganapathi.

Shodasha Ganapathis

Among the above-mentioned thirty-two forms, the first sixteen are considered to be the most powerful aspects. These forms are known as Shodasa Ganapathis. Special body complexions and insignia are attributed to these forms.

The sixteen forms of Sri Ganesha described in this text give a general idea of the special spiritual aspects represented by these divine forms. There are some variations in their descriptions in different texts. However, the main purpose of these forms is to evoke a certain divine mood in the mind of the devotee for invoking special aspects of spiritual power to achieve certain objectives. But these aspects should not be considered as rigidly compartmentalised. When there

is concentrated devotion on a particular power aspect, other aspects are also naturally invoked. Every form is one with others, as each form represents certain specific aspects of the same Reality. The science of *Manthra*, evolved by the seers is a rational technology of human evolution. Instead of wasting precious human energy, time and money on inventing destructive weapons, if human intellect had explored these positive sciences of the ancients to get a greater understanding about man, a superior human being would have evolved on this earth.

The *dhyaana slokas*, meditative verses, given under each aspect, are intended to evoke a spiritual *bhaava* or mood in the devotee. More than their literary content, the creation of this *bhaava* is their mission. Through that *bhaava* the limited human ego submits itself to the greater powers within and the intervention of these powers often brings about miraculous results.

Several savants have composed *dhyaana slokas* on these aspects of Sri Ganesha. The *dhyaana slokas* given here are from the book *Sri Tathwanidhi*, composed by Maharaja Mummudi Krishnaraja Otteyar, of Karnataka (courtesy: *Glory of Ganesha*, published by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay)

Repetition of *dhyaana slokas* or even earnest contemplation on the aspects would invoke the divine powers.



SRI BAALA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री वालगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

वालःस्रक् कदली चूत पनसेक्षु च मोदकम् ।
वालसूर्यमहं वन्दे देवं वालगणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Baala Ganapathi

*Balah srak kadalee chootha panasaykshu cha modakam
Baalasoorya-maham vanday dayvam Baalaganaadhipam.*

"Obeisance to Sri Baalaganapathi, who is the Lord of the Ganas, who is wearing the garlands of tender flowers, who holds mango, plantain, jack-fruit, sugarcane and sweets in his hands and who is brilliant like the rising sun."

Sri Baala Ganapathi represents that aspect of divine power that makes even the deserts fertile and reinforces human intelligence. His complexion has the crimson tinge of the rising sun.



SRI THARUNA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री तरुणगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशांकुशा-पूप-कपित्थ जम्बू
स्वदन्त-शाली-क्षु-मपि स्वहस्तै ।
धत्ते सदा यस्तरुणाभकान्तिः
पायात् स युष्मान् तरुणो गणेशः ॥

Meditation on Sri Tharuna Ganapathi

*Paasaamkusaa-poopa kapithda jamboo
Swadantha-shaalee kshu mapi swahasthai
Dhathithay sadaa yastharunaabhakaanthih
Paayaath sa yushmaan Tharuno-Ganeshah*

"May Sri Tharuna Ganapathi, who has the youthful lustre of the morning sun, holding the noose, hook, rice-cake, guava fruit, rose apple, broken tusk, corn ears and sugarcane bless and protect you all."

Tharuna Ganapathi has a complexion of brilliant crimson.



SRI BHAKTHA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री भक्तगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

नारिकेलाम्र कदली गुड पायस धारिणम् ।
शरत्-चद्राभ-वपूषं भजे भक्त-गणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Bhaktha Ganapathi

*Naarikaylaamra kadalee guda paayasa dhaarinam
Sharathchandraabha vapusham bhajay Bhaktha-Ganaadhipam*

Obeisance to Sri Bhaktha Ganapathi, who holds coconut, mango, plantain, jaggery *Paayasam* and who is splendidly white like the autumn moon.



SRI VEERA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री वीरगणति ध्यानम् ॥

भेताल-शक्ति-शर-कार्मुक-चक्र-खड्ग
खड्गाङ्ग-मुद्गर-गदाङ्कुश-नागपाशान्
शूलं च-कुन्त-परशू-ज्वलमुद्वहन्तं
वीरं गणेशमरुणं सततं स्मरामि ॥

Meditation on Veera Ganapathi

*Baythaala-shakthi shara kaarmuka chakra khadga
Khadvaamga mudgara gadaamkusha naagapaashaan
Shoolam cha kuntha parashoo jwalamudvahantham
Veeram Ganeshamarunam sathatham smaraami*

"I always remember Sri Veera Ganapathi, who is armed with the terrible power Bethaala, arrow, bow, wheel, sword, club, hammar, mace, the serpent-noose Naaga Paasa, spear, plough and a splendid axe." His colour is deep crimson. He punishes the evil and protects the good.



SRI SHAKTHI GANAPATHI

॥ श्री शक्तिगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

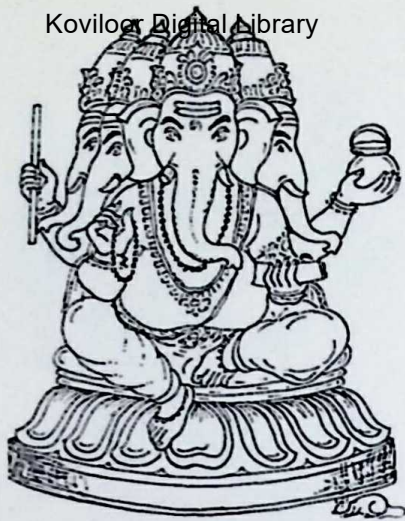
आलींग्य देवीं हरितांगयां
परस्पराश्लिष्ट-कटिप्रदेश
सन्ध्यारुणं पाशश्रुणी वहन्तं
भयापहं शक्तिगणेशमीडे ॥

Meditation on Shakthi Ganapathi

*Aalimgya dayveem. harithaamgayaam
Parasparaashlishta kadipradaysha
Sandhyaarunam paashashrunee vahantham
Bhayaapaham Shakthi-Ganeshameeday*

" I worship Sri Shakthi Ganapathi, who is warmly embracing the green-hued Goddess, who shines with the splendour of the setting sun and holding noose and rod in his hands."

He is the destroyer of fear. His colour is vermilion.



SRI DWIJA GANAPATHI

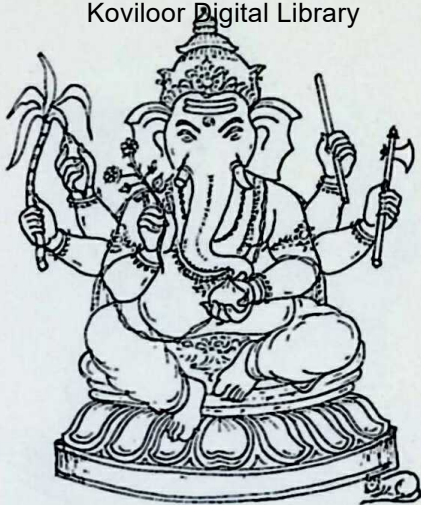
॥ श्री द्विजगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

यं पुस्तकाक्ष-गुणदण्ड-कमण्डलु श्री -
विद्योत्तमान-करभूषण-मिन्दु वर्णम् ।
स्तम्भेरमानन-चतुष्टय शोभमानं
त्वां य स्मरेद् द्विजगणधिपते स धन्यः ॥

Meditation on Sri Dwija Ganapathi

Yam pusthakaaksha gunadanda kamandalu shree
vidhyoothamaana karabhooshana-mindu varnam
sthambayramaanana chathushtaya shobhamaanam
Tvaam ya smarayd Dwija-Ganaadhipathay sa dhanyah

He who remembers Thee, Sri Dwija Ganapathi, holding the book, rosary, staff and the water-bowl Kamandalu, in Thy hands, and who shines like the brilliant white moon, is blessed indeed. Sri Dwija Ganapathi, also known as Dwaja Ganapathi. He is depicted to have four faces.



SRI SIDDHI GANAPATHI

॥ श्री सिद्धिगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पक्वचूतफल पुष्पमञ्जरी -
रिक्षुदंड-तिलमोदकैः सह ।
उद्धहन् परशु-मस्तु ते नमः
श्री-समृद्धि-युत हेमपिंगल ॥

Meditation on Sri Siddhi Ganapathi

*Pakvachoothaphala pushpamanjaree
rikshudamda thilamodakaih saha
udvahan parashu masthu thay namah
Shree samridvi-yutha haymapingala*

"Obeisance to Thee O golden-hued Siddhi Ganapathi who is accompanied by wealth and prosperity and who holds a rope, mango, staff, flowers, sugarcane, sesame seeds, sweets and axe in Thy hands."

He is the promoter of prosperity in land and human life. As he is golden-hued he is also known as Pingale Ganapathi.



SRI UCHCHISHTA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री उच्छिष्टगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

नीलाब्ज-दाडिमी-वीणा शालीपुञ्चाक्षसूत्रकः ।
दधद्-उच्छिष्ट-नामायं गणेशः पातु मेचकः ॥

Meditation on Sri Uchchishta Ganapathi

*Neelaabja daadimee Veenaa
shaleepunchaakshasoothrakah
Dadhad Uchchishta naamaayam
Ganeshah paathu mechakah*

"May the blue-hued Uchchishta Ganapathi, who holds a deep-blue lotus, pomegranate fruit, Veena, corn ears and rosary in His hands protect us."

He is blue in complexion.



SRI VIGHNARAJA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री विघ्नराजगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

शंखे-क्षु-चाप-कुसुमेषु-कुठार-पाश-
चक्रः-स्वदन्त-श्रुणि-मञ्जरि-काशराद्यैः ।
पाणिश्रुतैः परिसमीहित-भूषणश्रीः
विघ्नेश्वरो विजयते तपनीयसारः ॥

Shamkhaykshu chaapa kusumayshu kudaara paasa
Chakrah swadhantha shruni manjari kaasharaadhyaih
Paanishrutaih parisameehitha bhooshanashreeh
Vighnesharoo vijayathay thapaneeyasaarah

"Sri Vighneshwara is ever victorious, who is adorned with conch, sugarcane, bow, flowers, dagger, rope, wheel, tusk, hook, bunch of tender leaves and *dharbha* grass in his hands. He is the very essence of all lights."

He has a golden complexion.



SRI KSHIPRA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री क्षिप्रगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

दन्तकल्पलता-पाश रत्नकुम्भां-शुको-ज्वलम् ।
बन्धूक-कमनीयाभम् ध्यायेत् क्षिप्रगणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Kshipra Ganapathi

*Dantha kalpalathaa paasha
rathnakumbhaam-shuko-jwalam-
Bandhooka-kamaneeyaabham
Dhyaaeth Kshipra Ganaadhipam*

"I meditate on Kshipra Ganapathi, who holds the tusk, the wish-yielding creeper, noose, pot of jewels, hook, and who is effulgent like the red *Bhandhooka* flower."

He symbolises the quickly pleasing disposition of Sri Ganesha. His colour is crimson.



SRI HERAMBA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री हेरम्बगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

अभय-वरद-हस्तः पाश-दन्ता-क्षमाला
श्रुणि-परशु-दधानो मुद्गारं मोदकं च ।
फल-मधिगतसिंहः पञ्चमातंग वक्त्रो
गणपतिरतिगौरः पातु हेरम्ब नाम ॥

Meditation on Sri Heramba Ganapathi

*Abhaya varada hasthah paasha danthaakshamala
Shruni parashu dadhano mudgaram modakam cha
Phala-madhigathasimhah panchamaathamga vaktro
Ganapathirathigaurah paathu Heramba naama*

"May Sri Heramba Ganapathi protect us, whose two hands express the mystic signs of *abhaya* (freedom-from fear) and *abheeshta* (life's fulfilment), and the other hands holding the noose, tusk, rosary, hook, axe, hammer, sweets and fruits, who rides a lion, who has five faces and who is snow-white in complexion."



SRI LAKSHMI GANAPATHI

॥ श्री लक्ष्मीगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

विघ्नाय- शुक-बीजपूरकमिल-न्माणिक्य-कुम्भांशुकान्
पाशं कल्पलतां च खड्ग-विलसत् ज्योतिः सुधा-निर्जरः ।

श्यामेनात्र सरोरुहेण सहितं देवी-द्वयं चा-न्तिके
गौरांगो-ख-नाद-हस्ति-निहितो लक्ष्मी-गणेशोऽवतात् ॥

Meditation on Sri Lakshmi Ganapathi

*Bibhraanas-shuka beejapoorakamila-nmaanikya kumbhaamshukaan
Paashaam kalpalathaam cha khadga vilasath jyothih sudhaa nirjjarah
Shyamaynaathra saroruhayna sahiham dayvee dwayam chaanthikay
Gauraamgo rava naada hashti nihitho Lakshmee-Ganeshay avathaath*

"May Sri Lakshmee Ganesha, who is holding a parrot, apple, brilliant jewel pot, noose, wish-yielding creeper, sword and causes a flow of enlightening nectar, attended by two Goddesses bearing blue lotuses on both sides, who is snow-white in colour and who is engrossed in the trumpet sound of the elephant, protect us."



SRI MAHAA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री महागणपति ध्यानम् ॥

हस्तीन्द्रानन-मिन्दुचूड-मरुणच्छायं त्रिनेत्रं रसात् -
आश्लिष्टं प्रियया स पद्मकरया स्वान्तस्थया संस्थितम् ।
बीजापूरक-देक्षु-कार्मुक-लसत् चक्रा-ब्ज-पाशो-त्पल -
व्रीह्याग्र-स्वविषाण-रत्नकलशान् हस्तैर्वहन्तं भजे ॥

*Hashteedraanana-minduchooda-marunachchaayam-thrinaythram rasath
Aaslishtam priyayaa sa padmakarayaa swaanthasthayaa samsthitam
Beejaapooraka-dekshu kaarmuka-lasath chakraabja paasothpala
Vreehyaagra swavishaana ratnakalasaan hasthai vahantham bhajay*

I worship Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, with the face of the divine elephant, with crescent-decked crown, red in complexion, three-eyed, embracing His beloved consort who is holding a lotus in Her hand, and who ever resides in His heart, He who holds pomegranate, sugarcane, bow, discus, lotus, noose, lilies, paddy corn ears, tusk, and a pot of jewels in His hands.

Sri Mahaa Ganapathi is accompanied by a Goddess who sits

on His left side. He has eight hands holding weapons, sugar cane, paddy corn ears, flowers and other insignia. His colour is crimson.

He is elaborately described in Sri Raghava Chaitanya's book. *Mahaa Ganapathi Sthothram* — a description according to the science on *Manthras*. He is depicted as sitting on a lion. His abode is called *Aatmaananda Bhavanam* — House of Supreme Bliss — and is surrounded by an ocean of sugarcane juice. The several Gods and Goddesses around Him symbolise the supreme oneness of all spiritual powers. In front of Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, under a *bilwa* tree sit Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. On his left side under a banyan tree sit Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi and under a peepul tree on his back sit Rati and Manmatha. On the left, under a *priyangu* tree sit God Varaaha and Goddess Earth. Sri Mahaa Ganapathi sits in the middle in unsurpassed splendour. His consort Goddess Vallabha sits on his lap. He has ten hands. In his eight hands he holds the insignia of the surrounding deities, the lotus of Goddess Lakshmi, Vishnu's discus, Devi's noose, Shiva's trident, Rati Devi's Utpala flower, and Varaaha's club. In the other two hands he holds His own insignia, the broken tusk and the insignia of his consort, the pomegranate fruit.

In the midst of such colourful surroundings, Sri Mahaa Ganapathi sits in deep meditation absorbed in His own Reality. Thus, He symbolises here the Ultimate Truth, which is the Cause of everything, of every quality and every aspect. He is everything and He transcends everything. All diversities find their oneness in Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, who is with form and formless at the same time.



SRI VIJAYA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री विजयगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशांकुशः स्वदन्ताग्र फलवा-नाखुवाहन ।
निहन्तां सर्वविघ्नानां रक्त-वर्णो विनायकः ॥

Meditation on Vijaya Ganapathi

*Paasaam-kushah swadanthaagra phalavaanaaghuvaahana
Nihanthaam sarvavighnaanaam rakthavarano Vinaayakah.*

"Obeisance to Sri Vijaya Ganapathi, who is red-hued, who destroys all obstacles, who rides his mouse mount and who holds the noose, hook, tusk and fruits in his hands."

His colour is crimson.



SRI NRITHTHA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री नृत्तगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशांकुशापूपकुठारदन्त -
चंचत्करं क्लुप्तवरांगुलीयकम् ।
पीतप्रभंकुक्षिः करस्थदन्तं
भजामि नृत्तोपपदं गणेशम् ॥

Meditation on Nriththa Ganapathi

*Paashaamkushaa poopa kudaara dantha
Chamchath karam kluptha varaamguleeyakam
Peethaprabham kukshih karasya dantham
Bhajaami nriththopapadam Ganesham.*

I worship Sri Ganesha, who is dancing and who is holding in his hands the noose, hook, sweet cake, dagger and tusk, who wears divine rings in His delicate fingers, whose hands sway (while dancing), who bears the broken tusk and whose belly shines with a golden hue.



SRI UDHWA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री उद्वगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

कल्हार-शालि-कमले-क्षुक-चाप-बाण -
दन्त-प्ररोहक-गदी कनकोज्ज्वलाङ्गः ।
आलिंग-नोद्यत-करो हरितांग-यष्ट्या
देव्याः करोतु शुभ-मुद्वगणाधिपो मे ॥

Meditation on Sri Udhwa Ganapathi

*Kalhaara-shaali kamalay-kshuka chaapa baana
Dantha prarohaka gadee kanakojvalangah
Aalimganodyatha karo haraithaamga-yashtyaa
Dayvyaaah karothu shubha-mudva-Ganadhipo may*

May Sri Udhwa Ganapathi, who holds kalhara flowers, corn ear, lotus, sugarcane, bow and arrow, tusk, tender grass sprout, and mace, whose body shines like gold, who lifts His hand to embrace the green-hued Goddess, bring me auspiciousness.

Among the other aspects of Sri Ganeha are:

Sri Sankatahara Ganapathi (also known as Sankashta Harana Ganapathi)

As the name indicates, the grace of Sri Sankatahara Ganapathi removes pain and suffering. *His dhyana sloka* is:

॥ श्री संकटहरण गणपति ध्यानम् ॥

बालार्कारुण-कान्तिर्वामे बालं वहन्नं के ।
लसत् इन्दीवर-हस्तां गौरिं सद्-रत्न शोभाद् याम् ॥
दक्षे-अंकुश-वर पाणिं वामे पाशं च पायसं पात्रम् ।
नीलांकुश संपन्नः पीठे पद्मारुणो तिष्ठन् ।
संकष्ट-हरणद् रक्षः पायात् संकष्ट पूजया तुष्टः

Meditation on Sri Sankashta-harana Ganapathi

*Baalaaarkkaaruna kaanthirvaamy baalaam vahannam kay
Lasat indeevara hasthaam Gaureem sad rathna shobhaat yaam
Dakshay amkusa vara paanim vaamay paasam cha paayasam paathram
Neelaamkusha sampannah peeday padmaaruno thishtan
Samkashta haranad rakshah paayaath samkashta poojayaa thushtah.*

"May Sri Samkashta Ganapathi who shines like the rising sun, with the lotus-holding, jewel-decked, beautiful Goddess on His lap, His right hands holding the hook and expressing the *Abheeshta Mudra*, the boon-yielding sign, and the left hands bearing the noose and a pot of *Paayasam*, and is seated on a red lotus, wearing blue clothes and who always removes the sorrows of the devout, be pleased by our Sankashta-hara worship and protect us."

Rina Mochaka Ganapathi liberates the devotees from debts and liabilities. His *dhyana sloka* is:

॥ श्रीऋणमोचक गणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशांकुशौ दन्त जम्ब्वे दधानः स्फटिक प्रभः ।

रत्नशुको गणपतिः मुदे स्याद् ऋणमोचकः॥

Meditation on Sri Rnamochaka Ganapathi

*Paasaamkusou dantha jambou dadhaanah spatika prabhah
Rakthaam shukoo Ganapathih muday syaad rnamochakah*

"May Lord Rnamochaka Ganapathi, who holds the noose, hook, tusk and rose apple, who shines like a crystal, and who adorns red clothes liberate us from all our debts and bestow happiness to us."

Sri Dundi Ganapathi holds a rosary in one of his hands suggesting the need of psychological disciplines to tune up the mind to higher harmony of the universe. There are famous temples of Sri Dundi Ganapathi in Kasi in the north and in Tiruchandur in the south. Tradition has it that Sri Shankaracharya composed his renowned hymn, *Sri Ganesha Pancharathna Sthothram*, while on a visit to the temple in Tiruchandur.

Vara Ganapathi has a quickly pleasing disposition. He has light red complexion and three eyes. His head is described to be full of sweetest nectar. This concept symbolises the sweetness of the transcendental Bliss man experiences, when Kundalini energy unites with Supreme Consciousness and the conditioned human consciousness blooms as the

Infinite Reality — a transformation, which is figuratively described as blooming of a thousand-petalled lotus.

Sri Simha Ganapathi holds in one hand a ferocious lion and in another hand the musical instrument, Veenal. This symbolises the highly terror-striking and the most benign aspects of Nature and conveys the idea that man has the freedom to attune himself with the sublime harmony of Nature.

Sri Eaykaakshara Ganapathi represents the special creative aspect of *Pranavam* (ॐ) which gives rise to the various individual (apparently fragmented) manifestations of the universe. *Pranavam* has two aspects: *Samashti Pranavam* and *Vyaashti Pranavam*. The first is the all-encompassing creative vibrant state, the one that transcends all individual attributes. The second is the vibrant aspect that causes the individual attributes and variety.

The first, the *Samashti Pranavam*, is the subtlest vibrant manifestation of Brahman, and it cannot be differentiated from Brahman. The aspect of Sri Ganesha representing this state is stated to have the colour, *Sashivarnam*, the pure whiteness of the full Moon. Eaykaakshara Ganapathi (means, the single-syllabled Ganesha) represents the *Vyaashti Pranavam*. He has the crimson colour of the rising sun. Thus, from pure whiteness the colour changes to the redness of the rising sun, the colour which symbolises activity.

If one probes deep into such facets of India's spiritual vision, one will realise that they are not random figments of imagination, but very intelligently co-ordinated fields of

knowledge. From such profound insights of the Rishis, earnest modern researchers may be able to evolve a more comprehensive vision of man and the universe.

The above-mentioned two aspects of *Pranavam* are also described as Sri Suddha Vidyaa Tathva Vinaayaka, who is in the nature of pure knowledge, and as Sri Kantha Rudra Kumaara Vinaayaka, who is the Lord of the material forces. The latter draws power from the former. Sri Suddha Vidyaa Tathva Vinaayaka has a still higher aspect which is Ishwara Tathva Vinaayaka, an aspect that symbolises the Supreme Brahman.

Sri Nava Shakthi Vinaayaka is a special aspect of Sri Ganesha as the Lord of the nine planets. Sri Ganesha is considered as having a special influence over the planet Kethu, which has a malevolent nature. Worship is offered to Sri Ganesha on the Shukla Chathurthi (the fourth day of the bright moon) to ward off the evil effects of the wrong position of Kethu.

Among the rare forms of Sri Ganesha is his female aspect (Ganeshani), sculptured in the 64-Yogini temple in Bheraghat near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh and also in Shucheedram temple near Kanyakumari in Tamilnadu, where her form can be found on a pillar in front of the shrine of Sri Amman (Divine Mother).

A Glimpse into History

The seed of the Ganesha concept might have originated in the Vedic period or even before that. It sprouted and grew and during the Puraanic period evolved to fullness and burst

into bloom, spreading its fragrance, drawing popular devotion not only in India but in several other countries, too.

Much before Sri Adi Shankaracharya's time, Sri Ganesha became a widely worshipped deity. There is no mention of an elephant-faced God in the Vedas, although there is a mention of 'Ganapathi' in the opening verse of Rig Veda iii.23:

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
 कविं कवीनां उपमश्रवस्तमम्
 ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आनः
 श्रुण्वन्नृतिभिस्सीदसादनम्

*Ganaanaam thvaa Ganapathim havaamahay
 kavim kaveenaam upamashravasthamam
 Jyestharaajam brahmanaam brahmanaspatha aanah
 Shrunvannoothibhisseedasaadanam.*

This verse is said to be dedicated to Brihaspathi, who is considered as the preceptor of the gods. He is eulogised as the Lord of all the Ganas, the subtle powers that gave rise to the material universe of differentiated aspects. Ganapathi is also described here as the poet of the poets and the king of kings. This concept of the Vedas might have been later incorporated into the Ganesha concept.

The Vedas, Vedaangas, Braahmanas, Upanishads and several other philosophical and literary works that were composed just after the Vedic period do not contain benedictory verses dedicated to Sri Ganesha. However, scholars point out

that it is hard to find any work later than the 12th or the 13th century , which does not begin with an invocation of Sri Ganesha.

There is a reference about a deity with an elephant's face in the *Taithireeya Aaranyaka*, which mentions him as *Danthin* — the Tusker. The *Ganapathi Gaayathri*, an invocation in the *Naraayanopanishad*, which is said to be composed around the 6th A.D., Sri Ganesha is described as *Vakrathunda*, that is, the one having a curved trunk.

Referring to some ancient literary works, some scholars say that the concept of a God with an elephant's head might have been existing even before the second century A.D.

It is most likely that the idea of the elephant's face might have evolved from the shape of the letter ॐ (*Pranavam*), of which Sri Ganesha, as we have noted, is considered as a figurative representation. *Pranavam* (ॐ) has the semblance of an elephant's head. It is thought-provoking that the *Pranavam* sign in Tamil also has the same resemblance. It is possible that the salient philosophical ideas which go into the figure of Sri Ganesha have originated in the Vedas, which evolved through the contemplative texts, *Aaranyakas*, finally shaping itself into a perfected symbolic form in Sri Ganesha during the Puraanic period, an age when many a profound philosophical vision took Godly forms as part of a practical science of spirituality.

In some ancient texts there is a mention of some melevolent powers, said to be four in number, called

Vinaayakas, who have an evil disposition and who cause obstacles and impediments in human affairs. Some scholars would like to trace the Ganesha concept to this belief. While these malefic Vinaayakas are representations of the retrogressive anti-evolutionary inertia in the human psyche, Sri Ganesha represents the most positive and progressive power that removes the obstacles and inertia and takes the human phenomenon to ever greater heights. Both these concepts are thoroughly contradictory. Vighnaraaja, an appellation of Sri Ganesha, does not mean the creator of obstacles, but one who has the mastery over obstacles. In the great hymn, *Sri Lalithaa Sahasranaama*, it is said that the Goddess created Sri Ganesha to shatter the formidable obstacle, *Vighna Yanthra*, devised by the demon Bhandasura, who represents the terrible power of anti-evolutionary inertia in man. Sri Ganesha symbolises a thorough positivisation of human psyche negating the negative trends for human evolution to ever greater heights. Sri Ganesha evidently got the appellation Vinaayaka as the supreme leader, representing the first creative vibration. He is the epitome of the yogic knowledge of vanquishing negative mental traits by the constant application of positive ideas.

According to some scholars Ganesha worship was introduced in Tamilnadu in the 7th century A.D., after the conquest of Badami (Vaathapi) in the north, by the Pallava king Narasimhavarmar (630-668 A.D.). It is said that his General, Paramjothi, who later came to be known reverentially as Siruthonda Nayanar, brought an image of Vaathapi Ganapathi from Badami to Tamilnadu and thereafter Ganesha

worship began and became very popular there.

However, recent researches indicate that Ganesha worship was prevalent in Tamilandu much earlier than this period. It is pointed out that Saint Tiru Gnaanasambandhar, who lived possibly in the 6th century, or was a contemporary of Siruthonda Nayanar, sings about a Shiva temple in Thiruvanchuzhi near Kumbakonam, a temple famous for the worship of Vinaayaka also. In a hymn, Tiru Gnaanasambandhar refers to Sri Vinaayaka of this shrine, which indicates that Ganesha worship was vogue before the 7th century. Mr. S. Manickavasagam writes (The Hindu, April 10, 1994) about a rare form of Sri Ganesha in one of the oldest cave temples in South India at Pillayarpatti. An inscription found there, which researchers place as belonging to a period between the 4th and the 6th century mentions about 'Eru-Kattur', evidently a place from where expert sculptors came to carve the cave temple. He also cites I.K. Sarma's book *The Development of Early Saiva Art and Architecture*, which mentions about a bronze plate with a clearly recognisable version of Ganapathi found in Luristan (Western Iran) dated B.C. 1200. The history of Ganesha concept calls for serious research.

The Ganesha theme might have a pre-Vedic origin. The resemblance of the *Pranavam* symbol in the two very ancient languages, Sanskrit and Tamil, with divergent origins, and their relation to the form of Sri Ganesha may be pointing to some unknown past, when from an all-embracing philosophical vision, the two symbols were originated. The idea might have been forgotten in the passage of time and re-emerged

powerfully during the Puraanic age. However, the Puraanas undoubtedly emphasise the relation between ॐ and Sri Ganesha.

The Ganesha Thaapini upanishad unambiguously mentions that Ganesha's form was originated from Pranavam ततश्च ॐ इति ध्वनिरभूत् । स वै गजाकारः (Thathascha ॐ ithi dvanirabhooth. Sa vai Gajaakaarah). "He has the elephant's form because of origin from the sound ॐ." Thus Sri Ganesha personifies both the content and form of ॐ.

Like the sublime lines of a masterly poem blooming in the mind of a gifted poet, like the sudden emergence of a scientific idea in the mind of a scientist, the architypal symbols of the aspects of Truth arise in the mind of the seers. Sri Ganesha is such a significant theme vibrant with the power of the Divine.

The Science of Manthra and Sri Ganesha

The seers co-ordinated this profound divine theme with the system of *Manthra*, which is the applied science of spirituality.

The science of Manthra deals with the power fields of the spiritual energy *Kundalini* in the human system, and the *Praana* energy in the background of the universe and their interconnections. The various power aspects of *Kundalini* energy are represented by the 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet which are shown on the petals of the lotuses that symbolise the six subtle energy centres along the cerebro-

spinal system. This science, which emerged from the illumined consciousness of seers, is capable of evolving the human system to express the higher stages of consciousness, lifting mankind to greater vistas of civilization. Yet, like the physical sciences, this science of subtler powers can also be misused, which will bring havoc not only upon whom it is used but also eventually on the user himself, as any misuse is contrary to the higher laws of Nature's harmony.

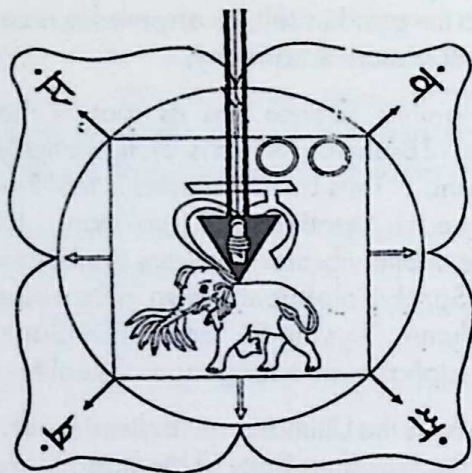
The Manthra science has its root in the primordial vibratory state of Brahman, which is ॐ, figuratively symbolised by Sri Ganesha. Thus Lord Ganesha is the Presiding Deity of the science of Manthra and evolution. His 51 forms represent the subtle vibratory powers symbolised by the 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet shown in the energy centres of the spinal column. Thus the 51 forms of Sri Ganesha form the letters of an alphabet of a language of Reality.

While he is the Ultimate, symbolised by ॐ, he is, as we have noted, the Presiding Deity of Moolaadhaara, the seat of Kundalini, and thus the guiding power of human evolution. He is extolled in the prayer:

गुदाद् द्वयङ् गुलमूर्ध्वं तु लिङ्गादेकाङ्गुलादयः ।
 मूलाधारस्त्रिकोणाभं चतुर्दलसरोरुहम् ॥
 व-श-ष-साक्षरे युक्तं लसदोङ्कारकर्णिकम् ।
 तत्रस्थं वल्लभीरम्यं गणेश्वरमुपास्महे ॥

*Gudaaddwayamgulamoordvamthulingaadaykaamgulaadayah
 Moolaadhaarasthrikonaabham chathurdala saroruham
 va-sha-shsha-saaksharay yuktham lasadomkaarakarnikam
 Thathrastham Vallabheeramyam Ganeshwaramupaasmahay.*

"I meditate upon Sri Ganesha, who pleases his consort Vallabhi, and is seated within the *Pranava*-pericarped four-petalled lotus, the four petals inscribed with the four letters Va-Sha-Shsha and Sa, in the triangle of Moolaadhaara located in the spinal column, near the anus and the genitals."



The Moolaadhaara Chakra

As the Lord of the Moolaadhaara Chakra, in the lowest part of the spinal column, Sri Ganesha is also the Lord of the lowest stage of evolution, the earth principle, Thus he is the spiritual power that prompts consciousness locked in earth to express its greater dimensions through living beings, and at the human stage inspires the Kundalini energy to help expand consciousness to its highest dimensions. This aspect of Lord Ganesha as the Lord of the Moolaadhaara Chakra is enshrined in the Moolaadhaara Temple in Tiruvarur in Tamilnadu.

And in his highest aspect, Sri Ganesha is the Lord the *Sahasraara Padma*, the Thousand-Petalled Lotus, the ultimate stage of expression of Supreme Consciousness, in the human brain. He is thus both the way and the goal. This ultimate aspect of Sri Ganesha is symbolised in a temple on the top of a hill in Tiruchi, also in Tamilnadu. This temple is known as the temple of Uchchi Pillayar — Lord Ganesha in his most supreme aspect.

The Rishis reminded us that all these forms of Sri Ganesha are letters of a form-word-power alphabet of a language which helps us realise our spiritual Reality, which is unconditioned by any form, and the supreme Source of all forms.

Sri Shankaracharya, in his superb hymn, *Sri Ganesha Bhujangam*, extols Sri Ganesha as that Reality:

यमेकाक्षरं निर्मलं निर्विकल्पं
गुणातीतमानन्दमाकारशून्यम् ।
परं पारमोङ्कारमात्मनायगर्भं
वदन्ति प्रगल्भं पुराणं तमीडे ॥

Yamaykaaksharam nirmalam nirvikalpam
Gunaatheetha-maananda-maakaara-soonyam
Param Paara-momkaara-maamnaaya-garbham
Vadanthi pragalbham puraanam thameeday.

"To him, whom the great savants disclose as the supreme single-syllabled Sound, stainless, unconditioned, transcending the qualities, blissful, formless, the transcenden-

tal, the furtherest beyond, the ॐ, the very essence of the sacred texts — to that Primeval One I offer my adoration."

The Manthras for Invocation

There are Manthras and hymns (*Sthothras*) in several Puraanas to invoke the spiritual power of Sri Ganesha. Some of the Manthras are given below. The hymns, *Sri Ganesha-sthavam*, *Sri Ganesha-Panchartna-Sthothram* and *Sri Vinaayaka Ashtothara Sathanaamaavali* are given in the last pages.

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः

Om Sri Ganayshaaya Namah

ॐ श्री महागणपतये नमः

Om Sri Mahaa Ganapathaye Namah

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः

Om Gam Ganapathaye Namah

ॐ श्री विनायकाय नमः

Om Sri Vinaayakaaya Namah

Japa and Ritualistic Worship

Japa, the contemplative repetition of a sacred Name or a group of words that express adoration for the Divine, or a hymn, is a very effective means to open the subtle channels of communication with the power fields of our greater Reality. Sincere perseverance in *Japa* gradually settles the turbulent waves of the mind, enables one's consciousness to get a control over himself, and brings him in attunement with the

sublime harmony of the universe. Many pestering doubts get cleared by themselves. One experiences an unseen loving Presence guiding and protecting him. Obstacles prove less formidable; the small voice within that struggles to show the right path becomes effectively audible and a Grace reveals to one the glorious Truth behind the transitoriness of the universe. By refining the texture of the mind, *japa* takes one to the threshold of Reality. Lord Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-Geetha that among the self-purifying disciplines *japa* is He Himself.

Yajnaanaam japayajnosmi

Ritualistic worship is also an effective means for the communion with Reality. Elaborate modes of ritualistic worship have been prescribed by the sages to aid the mind, senses and body to participate as one whole unit in worship. During a *Pooja*, the beautiful floral offerings pleasing to the eyes, the fragrance of flowers and incense, the auspicious sound of bells and symbols and the chanting of the rhyming Manthras, harmoniously elevate one's being to the higher aspects of Reality. With all the outgoing senses locked in a pleasant experience, the mind reaches out to the Infinite.

Both *japa* and ritualistic worship are expressions of longing and love for a communion with Reality. Some people talk about the meaninglessness of rituals; they forget that in Nature, the living beings have evolved certain behaviour patterns to express their love. Ritualistic worship is a manifestation of man's love for Reality. While *japa* tunes up an in-

dividual for the quest of communion, ritualistic worship makes several people to participate in it, creating an atmosphere for the communion, which even temporary, will certainly have a lasting, ennobling influence on their minds. *Japa* and ritualistic worship activate the faculties of the divine energy Kundalini, sometimes bringing about miraculous effects. Ritualistic *poojas* in temples have an effective influence in lessening the tensions of the mind, which cause many ailments of body and mind. They have a recharging and refreshing influence on the human system by bringing the mind in attunement with the Power Eternal, the causeless Cause of the universe.

Worship is an effective means for the conditioned human psyche to come in contact with the all-powerful One, who is closest to everyone, though, we often think, He is far away from us. Rishis have developed *japa* and worship as a science of spirituality and everyone can acquire this knowledge. Knowledge liberates. If *japa* and worship are done in a mood of love for (not from fear of) the Supreme, that will certainly reinforce our inner content.

Shodashopachaara Pooja

This is an elaborate ritualistic worship with sixteen types of offerings for the Lord. The *poojas* will be performed on to an idol or picture of the Lord decorated with flower garlands and the offerings are made along with the chanting of Manthras. These sixteen rituals through which human love for the Divine is expressed, are:

1. Invocation (*Aavaahanam*). Then, offerings of:
 2. Seat (*Aasanam*), 3. Water for washing the feet (*Paadyam*), 4. Water for washing the hands (*Arghyam*), 5. Water for sipping (*Aachamaneeyam*), 6. Bath (*Snaanam*) 7. Clothes (*Vasthram*), 8. The Sacred Thread (*Yagnopaveetham*), 9. Fragrant anointment as sandalwood paste (*Gandham*) 10. Decoration with flowers, garlands, etc. (*Pushpa Maalyaadi*), accompanied by chanting of Manthras. This rite is known as *Archana*. 11. Burning of incense (*Dhoopam*), 12. Waving of light (*Deepam*) 13. Dedication of sweets, etc. (*Naivedyam*), 14. Betel leaves along with betel nuts (*Thaamboolam*) 15. Sacred, burning and lighting of camphor and circumambulation (*Neeraanjanam, Aaraartika, Pradakshinam*) and 16. Dedication by chanting of Manthras (*Manthra Pushpaanjali*).

Such elaborate ritualistic worship is performed on special occasions like Vinaayaka Chaturthi, house-warming ceremonies, etc.

Modes of Worship

Lord Ganesha is usually worshipped in forms made of clay and stone. It suits well with the legendary theme that he was born from the mud, signifying the emergence of life-principle in active form from matter and its onward evolutionary march overcoming obstacles at every stage, towards expansion to Supreme Consciousness and absolute freedom from the conditioning matter.

Breaking the Coconut

The symbolic significance of breaking coconuts before Lord Ganesha is thought-provoking. Human intelligence is conditioned by environmental knowledge. This conditioning is like a shell which prevents and insulates the mind from gaining deeper awareness which enables consciousness to unfold its greater dimensions. It is this shell of conditioned intelligence that confines man in his selfish and egoistic pursuits and keeps him and society in a state of suffering. Man has to break this shell on the stone of spiritual inquiry. The breaking of coconut before Lord Ganesha, the deity of evolutionary expansion, symbolises this fact.

Ganesha Chathurthi

Festivals have an important role in the cultural progress of mankind: Most of the festivals evolved in India are specially designed to bring man closer to his divine dimensions.

Ganesha Chathurthi is one such festival celebrated all over India and it integrates people in one powerful cultural sweep. The festival begins on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the *Bhava* month (August-September). Ganesha idols made of clay are worshipped in homes and public places. After two days of worship the idols are immersed in rivers or in the sea.

Even in India's freedom movement Ganesha Chathurthi festival had played an important role. During a period when

the British Government had banned all political meetings, Lokamaanya Balagangaadhara Thilak, the great national leader, organised huge Ganesha festivals and brought millions of people together to inculcate in them an awareness of India's perennial cultural heritage and spirit of national freedom. Thus, here also this mighty symbol of evolution, the Ganesha concept, and the thirst for freedom were graciously and beneficially blended.

Ganesha Vratham

Ganesha Vratham is a special ritual and practice for propitiating and activating the spiritual power of Lord Ganesha. It is performed to free oneself from baseless charges (made by others either purposefully or through misunderstanding) and ill-fame, to get back the lost things, to remove obstacles in an enterprise, etc. The *pooja* is performed on the fourth day of the dark fortnight. It is an elaborate propitiatory performance accompanied by rites as Shodashopachaara Pooja.

Gaanapathyas

Gaanapathyas are those who regard the Ganesha aspect of Reality as their chosen deity most dear to their heart (*Ishta Devatha*) and worship him.

The important texts of Gaanapathyas are:

1. Agni Puraanam 2. Atharva-Sikhopanishad
3. Atharvansheershopanishad 4. Angirasa Puraanam
5. Bhavishya Puraanam 6. Brahma-Vaivartha Puraanam

7. Braahma Puraanam
8. Brahmaanda Puraanam
9. Bhavishyothara Puraanam
10. Bhaargava Puraanam (also known as Vinaayaka Puraanam)
11. Baudhayaana Grihyasesha Soothra
12. Garuda Puraanam
13. Ganapathi Upanishad
14. Ganesha Geetha
15. Ganesha Puraanam
16. Ganesha Thanthram
17. Ganesha Kalpam
18. Ganesha-chaaruchandrika
19. Heramba Puraanam
20. Heramba Upanishad
21. Linga Puraanam
22. Mudgala Puraanam
23. Naaraayanopanishad
24. Skanda Puraanam
25. Varaaha Puraanam
26. Vishnu-dharmothara Puraanam
27. Vaamana Puraanam.

The *Mahaa Shiva Tanthra* describes in detail in thirty six chapters the various aspects of Ganesha worship as the *Manthradhaara Vidhi*, *Yanthradhaara Vidhi*, *Achaara Vidhi*, *Pooja Vidhi*, etc. The books like *Prapanchasaaram*, *Shaaradaathilakam*, *Shathapramodam*, *Manthra-Mahodadhi*, *Manthra-mahaarnava*, etc., deal with Ganesha *Upaasana*, the practice of invoking Sri Ganesha.

The Shad-Mathas

Hinduism includes in it diverse paths of spiritual pursuit. Sub-religions can co-exist in an all-embracing religion. Sri Shankaracharya has classified these spiritual pursuits into six major paths called *Shad-mathas*. They are *Gaanapathyam* (worship of Sri Ganesha) 2. *Kaumaaram* (worship of Sri Subrahmanya) 3. *Vaishnavam* (worship of Lord Vishnu) 4. *Sauram* (worship of the Sun-God), 5. *Saaktham* (worship of

The followers of each path have chosen for special worship the respective aspect of Reality. They also worship other aspects knowing well that all aspects represent the same Reality. This special aspect of Reality is their *Ishta Devatha*. This is the freedom one gets from the all-embracing character of Hinduism. One can worship any sublime concept of Reality most suited to one's psychological inclinations in the spiritual pursuit. It is a practical philosophy that takes into consideration the diversity of human trends; and therefore does not insist on any fanatical uniformity. The goal is spiritual expansion and self-realization, and one can choose any refining path for the purpose.

The texts on a particular Deity will extol him as the Supreme among all deities. For example, in the Puraanas on Lord Shiva, he will be projected as the greatest; in the Puraanas on Lord Vishnu, he is the Supreme. In the hymns on several God-forms written by the same saint, the respective form in each hymn can be seen eulogised as the greatest. Some Puraanas on Lord Shiva, are depicted as legends, pregnant with spiritual wisdom, told by Lord Vishnu to his consort Mahaalakshmi; Puraanas on Lord Vishnu are presented as told by Lord Shiva to Goddess Paarvathi.

There is nothing puzzling or contradictory in such an

approach; on the other hand it points to the fact that Hinduism regards all sublime paths to Reality as equally important. With this awareness one has the freedom to concentrate on any form of his liking for his spiritual practice. Therefore, one who chooses a particular God-form as the *Ishta Devatha* for spiritual practice, can consider that form as the most important for his devoted concentration, without being fanatical about it, as he is aware of the fact that all the sublime forms essentially open the doors to the same Reality. In the *Bhagavad Geetha* this truth is made very clear: "In whatever aspect you approach me, through that very aspect I reach you." There is no un-spiritual dogmatism; there is perfect freedom of spiritual pursuit.

In the great hymn on the Universal Divine Mother, *Sree Lalitha Sahasranaama-Sthothram*, the Goddess is extolled in Her one thousand worshipful names. These thousand names include the synonyms of Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Subrahmanya and other deities; Likewise the *Vishnu Sahasranaama*, on Lord Vishnu, contains names of several deities including that of Lord Shiva, and the *Shiva-sahasranaama* includes Lord Vishnu's name and the names of other Godly forms. Thus through diversity one is made aware of the Oneness of Reality, keeping him off from being fanatical and leaving his mind open and free. Great savants have composed soul stirring hymns on different sublime aspects of God.

TEMPLES OF SRI GANESHA

Most of the temples throughout the length and breadth of India have a shrine of Sri Ganesha in their premises, or at least a niche to house the Lord of all obstacles. There are also a number of temples exclusively dedicated to Sri Ganesha.

In Kerala, the south-western State, there is a well-known shrine of Sri Ganesha at Pazhayangadi, near the imposing Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple, in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the State. Everyday thousands visit this shrine, vibrant with spiritual power. Two other very popular centres of Ganesha worship in the State are in Kottarakkara in south Kerala and Madhur, in the northern-most region. Both these temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva, but they are more famous for the worship of Sri Ganesha, who commands a special importance in these shrines. Srimad Anantheshwara Vinaayaka temple in Madhur, about eight kms from Kasaragod town has an enormous idol of Sri Ganesha emanating spiritual splendour that showers the bountiful Grace on thousands.

Saravu Sri Mahaa Ganapathi temple in Mangalore is a famous temple of Sri Ganesha in Karnataka. There is a great shrine of Sri Ganesha on a hilltop in Kumbhasi near Kundapur in Dakshina Kannada district. There are innumerable shrines of Sri Ganesha in Karnataka. Many of them though small in size, draw a large number of devotees everyday.

Ganesha worship is very popular in Tamilnadu. The

Vinaayaka shrines in Luz Corner and in Triplicane, both in Madras, are very popular centres of worship in the city. The Moolaadhaara Temple in Tiruvarur and the Uchchi Pillayar Temple in Tiruchi are of legendary fame, and well-known for their special importance, which relates them to the divine energy in the human body, Kundalini. Pillayarpatti, near Karaikudi in Ramanathapuram district has a big temple dedicated to Sri Ganesha who is known as Sri Karpaga Vinaayaka. Sri Ganesha's idol installed by Sri Adi Shankaracharya in Akhilandeswari Temple in Tiruvanaikka, Mukkuruni Vinaayaka, a huge-size Ganesha image in Madurai Meenaakshi Temple and a very small marble figurine of Sri Ganesha in Tiruvalanchuzhi temple near Swamimalai, all in Tamilnadu, are among the many idols of Sri Ganesha notable for their special grace.

Manakulu Sri Vinaayaka Temple near Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a very popular centre of Sri Ganesha worship in Pondicherry.

Like Tamilnadu, Maharashtra is a region, where Ganesha worship is very popular. Sri Ashta-Vinaayaka temples in the State are specially famous throughout India. Situated in a range of about 150 kms from the city of Pune, these eight temples are: 1. *Sri Mayureshwar Temple of Morgaon*, on the bank of the river, Karha, 64 kms from Pune. 2. *Sri Siddhivinaayak Temple at Siddhatek*, on the bank of the river, Bhima, 101 kms from Pune and 12 kms from Daund railway station. 3. *Sri Balleshwar Temple at Pali*, 110 kms

from Pune and 30 kms from Karjat. 4. *Sri Varad Vinaayak Temple at Mahad*, about 1.5 kms off the main road connecting Pune to Khapoli. 5. *Sri Chintamani Temple of Theur*, on the bank of the river, Mula-Mutha, 22 kms from Pune. 6. *Sri Girijatmaj Temple at Lenyadri*. It is a cave temple carved out in a mountain. There are 283 steps to go upto the shrine. It is about 5 kms from a place called Junner. Junner is connected by road to Pune and Talegaon (88 kms) and is 230 kms from Bombay. A 5-km trek on foot or by bullock-cart takes the pilgrims to the cave shrine. 7. *Sri Vighneshwar Temple at Ozar*. From Junner one can go to this temple also. 8. *Sri Mahaa Ganapathi Temple at Ranjangaon*. The temple is 50 kms from Pune. In a basement below the shrine there is an idol of Sri Ganesha, which has 20 hands and 10 trunks. It is regarded as the original idol of the temple.

There are two very famous shrines of Dundi Ganapathi, one in Kasi in the north (Uttar Pradesh) and the other in Tiruchendur in the south (Tamilnadu).

In all the States of India one can find idols and paintings of Sri Ganesha that reveal the diverse characteristics of this great divine theme — ranging from the unique depictions in the Ellora caves to the Vinaayaka playing a flute like Sri Krishna, in the Sri Sailam temple in Andhra Pradesh.

SRI GANESHA WORSHIP ABROAD

Enshrined in the hearts of Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, Sri Ganesha and his worship became popular almost all over

Asia. Through Buddhism, Ganesha worship spread to several countries.

Afganistan

A fine example of Indo-Gaandhara school of art, a sculpture of Ganesha made of marble, 60 cms high and 35 cms broad, was found at Gardez in Afghanistan. An inscription found on its pedestal states: "This great and beautiful Mahaa Vinaayaka was consecrated by the renowned Shaahi king, the illustrious Shaahi Khingala, who was *Parama-bhattaaraka Mahaa raajaadhiraaja* in the eighth year of his reign, in the *mahaa-Jyeshtha maasa, shuklapaksha, trayodashi, Vishaakha nakshathra and Simha laghna*." This sculpture which is said to be of the 6th century A.D., indicates the popularity of Sri Ganesha worship in ancient times in the present-day Afghanistan.

Nepal

Worship of Sri Ganesha is very popular among Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal. Heramba Ganapathi is the most popular form of worship. This form of Sri Ganesha with five faces and with ten hands is depicted with his mount as a lion and Goddess Shakthi in his lap. A bronze statue taken from Nepal and exhibited in the Museum fur Volkerkunde in Munich shows a rat under one foot and a lion under the other.

Tibet

In Tibet Sri Ganesha is worshipped as a powerful guardian against demons and evil spirits. His image is placed above the main entrance in many Buddhist temples.

Mongolia

Through Buddhism, Ganesha worship spread to Mongolia and it became very popular in the 13th century A.D. In a sculpture in Mongolia Ganesha is depicted on his rat mount, which holds a wish-yielding jewel *Chintamani* in its mouth. The four hands hold, each an axe (*parashu*), a tuberous root (*moola-kanda*), bowl of sweets and a trident (*trishoola*).



From left : Ganesha sculptures in Cambodia, Bali and Japan

Ceylon

There is a fine sculpture of Sri Ganesha in the Shiva temple at Polonnaruwa. Sri Ganesha is worshipped in a separate shrine in the temple of Sri Subrahmanya at Katirgama, where, people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, come

to worship Sri Ganesha.

Burma

In the indigenous religious concept of Burma, Sri Ganesha became popular and came to be known as *Mahaapienne*. In a Ganesha image recovered from the debris of the ruins of a temple in Pagan, there was a unique form of Sri Ganesha seated in *Padmaasana*. In this figure with four hands, the upper right hand holds an axe and lower right, a rosary; the upper left hand a conch and the lower left hand is placed on his lap.

Thailand

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Hinduism was the popular religion in the southern parts of Thailand, when Ganesha worship was a part of the religious life there.

However, later when the people became Buddhists, the worship of Sri Ganesha continued, as he was popular among the Buddhists also. In the renowned Hindu temple in Bangkok, a bronze state of Sri Ganesha shows him wearing a *Nagayajnopaveetha*. His right hand holds the broken tusk and the left hand, a manuscript.

Cambodia

In Cambodia also Hinduism was prevalent in the early centuries of the Christian Era. A number of Ganesha images have been recovered. Scholars mention about a temple of the 10 th century, dedicated to Sri Ganesha at Prasatt Bak. A

simple statue, cross-legged without any ornaments, with only two hands and with a third eye on the forehead, was discovered at Thurol Phak Kim Kanda.

Java

There are evidences to believe that even before the Christian era, India had contacts with Java. Various types of Ganesha statues discovered in Java, show the different stages of iconography developed there.

Bali

Ganesha worship is very popular in Bali, where Hindu culture and Sanskrit study are still in vogue. Many of the Ganesha images in Bali depict Sri Ganesha in a standing posture and with a third eye.

Borneo

From several ancient records, it is presumed that Hinduism was prevalent in Borneo even before the 5th century. Among the several images discovered in a cave at Kombeng there was a fine stone statue of Ganesha with four hands.

China

A fresco in the rock-cut caves at Tun-huang and a stone image carved in the rock-cut temple at Kung-hsien and other evidences indicate the prevalence of Ganesha worship in China as early as the 5th century A.D.

Japan

Ganesha worship became very popular in Japan from

the 9th century A.D., when his worship was introduced by Kolso Daisi, a Buddhist. Images, mostly standing, with two, four or six arms and with a smiling countenance were sculptured and special temples were built for the worship of Sri Ganesha. There is also a unique double-form Ganesha in which two Ganesha forms, male and female aspects, are shown embracing each other. This figure is not usually worshipped in temples. Meditation upon the figure which is considered to have a deep yogic significance, has become part of personal spiritual discipline both in Japan and China.

SRI GANESHA STHOTRAS

Modern society is in a puzzling 'inner conflict'. It has lost touch with something vital and ennobling. Strife, hatred and ill-will pester human life in several countries. Even in affluent and technically advanced nations, life is turning to be a nightmare of stress and anxiety. In our highly technological age, man does such atrocious acts, which even ferocious animals abhor to do. Our 'advanced times' remind us of the prophetic words of the *Swetashvathaara Upanishad*: "Even if men may roll up the sky like a piece of leather, there will be no end of sorrow for him without realising the Effulgent One within."

Many psychologists today emphasise the necessity of modern man to 'discover the life of the Spirit' — that 'something within' which cures human ills and brings harmony to life. The real well-being and progress of society lies in the effort of the individual to strengthen his inner life.

When the human mind is channeled in a positive direction it will brighten life, bringing material and spiritual progress. For this the Sthothras — hymns in praise of the Divine — are very helpful. They are pregnant with powerful suggestions of strength and harmony in the form of praise for the powers and glory of the Divine, which is, in fact, our very Essence. When these hymns are repeated with devotion — which is the conditioned mind's freedom-obtaining submission to the unconditioned Reality — their subtle suggestions seep into the human depths invoking the Divine Power.

Sthothras harmonise us with the power of God. This harmony is the basic necessity for successful living. Prayer to Lord Ganesha, who is the personification of the Infinite Power within, helps to remove all obstacles from the path of life and inspires its evolution to higher stages of freedom.

There are several hymns to invoke the blessings of Sri Ganesha. Here we include *Sri Ganesha-sthavam*, which adores Sri Ganesha as the Supreme, *Sri Mahaa Ganesha Pancharathnam* by Sri Adi Shankaracharya and *Sri Vinaayaka Ashtothara-Sathanaamaavali* which contains 108 highly potent mystical attributes. One can attune oneself with the benevolent powers of Sri Ganesha through their earnest repetition or of any such great hymn or *Manthra*.

श्री गणेशस्तवम्

SRI GANESHA STHAVAM

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम् ।

परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Ajam nirvikalpam niraakaaramaykam
Niraananda-maananda-madvaitapoomam
Param nirgunam nirvisaysham nireeham
Parabrahma-roopam Ganesham bhajayma

O Lord, Thou art unborn, absolute and formless; Thou art beyond bliss and again bliss itself — the One and the Infinite. Thou art the Supreme, without attributes, differentiation and desire. Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. To Thee, O Lord do we offer our worship.

गुणातीतमानं चिदानन्दरूपं
चिदाभासकं सर्वगं ज्ञानगम्यम् ।
मुनिध्येयमाकाशरूपं परेशं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Gunaatheethamaanam chidaananda-roopam
Chidaabhaasakam Sarvagam gnaanagamyam
Munidhayyamaakaasharoomam paraysham
Parabrahmaroomam Ganesham bhajema

Thy nature is beyond attributes. Thou art the embodiment of intelligence and bliss, the effulgent Spirit, the all-pervading, the goal of knowledge. Thou art the object of meditation to the sages, formless and omnipresent like ether. Thou art the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Brahman.

जगत्कारणं कारणज्ञानरूपं
सुरादिं सुखादिं गुणेशं गणेशम् ।

जगद्व्यापिनं विश्ववन्द्यं सुरेशं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Jagatkaaranam Kaaranajnana roopam
Suraadim Sukhaadim gunaysham Ganesham
Jagathvyapinam Vishwaroopam Suraysham
Parabrahma roopam Ganaysham bhajayma

Thou art the the cause of the world, the primal knowledge, the origin of gods, the origin of bliss, the Lord of Gunas, the Lord of heavenly hosts. Thou pervadest the universe and art worshipped by all. Thou art the lord of gods. Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. To Thee, O Lord, do we offer our worship.

English version from 'Universal Prayers'
by Swami Yatiswarananda

॥ श्री महागणेशपञ्चरत्नम्॥

SRI MAHAA GANESHA PANCHARATHNAM

मुदा करात्तमोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकं
कलाधरावतंसकं विलासिलोकरक्षकम् ।
अनायकैकनायकं विनाशितेभदैत्यकं
नताशुभाशुनाशकं नमामि तं विनायकम् ॥१॥

Mudaakaraatha modakam sadaa vimukthisaadhakam
Kalaadharaavathamsakam vilaasilokarakshakam
Anaayakaikanaayakam vinaashithaybhadaityakam
Nathaashubhaashu naashakam namaami tham Vinaayakam.

Holding with delight the sweet *Modaka* (symbolising spiritual joy), he grants always to the devout the delight of everlasting spiritual freedom. He wears the crescent, (the symbol of the cyclic nature of the universe) on his forehead. He protects those who meditate on him. He is a matchless leader. He destroys the terrible demons of evil. He dispels the misery of those who take refuge in him. To Him, to Lord Vinaayaka, I bow in obeisance.

नतेतरातिभीकरं नवोदितार्कभास्वरं
नमत्सुरारिनिर्जरं नताधिकापदुद्धरम् ।
सुरेश्वरं निधीश्वरं गजेश्वरं गणेश्वरं
महेश्वरं तमाश्रये परात्परं निरन्तरम् ॥२॥

Nathaytharaathi-bheekaram navodithaarka-bhaasvaram
Namat-suraari-nirjaram nataadhikaapadudvaram
Surayshvaram nidheeshvaram gayayshvaram Ganeshvaram
Mahayshvaram thamaashraye paraathparam nirantharam.

He is terrible to those who do not turn to the all-pervading harmonising power of God. He is luminous like a morning sun. He is adored by both the Devas and the Asuras. He saves from grave dangers. He is the Lord of the Devas, Lord of wealth, Lord of the elephantine forces of Nature, Lord of the subtle principles of the universe, the Lord Supreme, the One Transcendental Being. I always take refuge in Him.

समस्तलोकशंकरं निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं
दरेतरोदरं वरं वरेभवक्त्रमक्षरम् ।
कृपाकरं क्षमाकरं मुदाकरं यशस्करं
मनस्करं नमस्कृतां नमस्करोमि भास्वरम् ।

Samastha-loka shamkaram nirastha daithya-kunjaram
 Daraytharodaram varam varaybhavakthramaksharam
 Kripaakaram kshamaakaram mudaakaram yeshaskaram
 Manaskaram namaskrithaam namaskaromi bhaasvaram

He brings well-being to the whole universe. He destroys the terrible evil forces. He has an all-consuming pot-belly. He is endower of boons. He is everlasting. He is bountiful. He gives joy, well-being and glory to those who worship him. I salute this Ever Effulgent Being.

अकिंचनार्तिमार्जनं चिरन्तनोक्तिभ्राजनं
 पुरारिपूर्वनन्दनं सुरारिगर्वचर्वणम् ।
 प्रपञ्चनाशभीषणं धनञ्जयादिभूषणं
 कपोलदानवारणं भजे पुराणवारणम् ॥४॥

Akimchanaarathi-maarjanam chiranthanokthi bhaajnam
 Puraaripoorvanandanam suraari garva charvanam
 Prapanchanaasha bheeshanam Dhananjayaadi bhooshanam
 Kapoladaana-vaaranam bhajay puraanavaaranam.

He dispels ills and sufferings of the devout who constantly prays to him. He is the son of Lord Shiva who destroys the demons. He smashes the pride of the fierceful demons. His terrible might can dissolve the whole universe. He is adored by the valiant men like Arjuna. The elephant-faced Lord emanates strength from his powerful countenance. To this timeless elephant-faced Lord I bow in obeisance.

नितान्तकान्तिदन्तकान्तमन्तकान्तकात्मजम्
 अचिन्त्यरूपमन्तहीनमन्तरायकृत्तनम् ।

हृदन्तरे निरन्तरं वसन्तमेव योगिनां

तमेकदन्तमेव तं विचिन्तयामि सन्ततम् ॥५॥

Nithaanthakaanthi-danthakaantha-manthakaantha-kaathmajam
Achinthyaroopam anthaheenam antharaaya-krinthanam
Hridantharay nirantharam vasanthamayva yoginaam
Tamaykadanthamaykamayva tam vichinthayaami santhatham.

He is graceful with shiny teeth. He is the son of Lord Shiva, who is the Lord of Yama, the Lord of death. His form is not conceivable by thought. He is Eternal. He is the destroyer of all miseries. He dwells always in the heart of the Yogis. I always remember the One-Tusked Lord.

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नमादरेण योऽन्वहं

प्रजल्पति प्रभातके हुदि स्मरन् गणेश्वरम् ।

अरोगतामदोषतां सुसाहितीं सुपुत्रतां

समाहितायुरष्टभूतिमभ्युपैति सोचिरात् ॥६॥

Mahaaganesha-pancharathnam aadarayna yonvaham
Prajalpathi prabhaathakay hridi smaran Ganeshwaram
Arogathaam-adoshathaam susaahiteem suputhrathaam
Samaahitaayurashta-bhoothimabhyupaithi sochiraath.

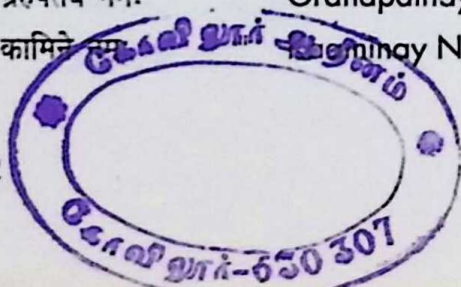
Whoever chants with devotion this Pancharathna Sthothra every day in the early dawn meditating on Sri Mahaa Ganesha, will be freed from all afflictions. He will enjoy good health, have noble children, prosperity, long life, divine gifts and talents.

॥ श्री विनायक अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलि ॥

Sri Vinaayaka Ashtothara Sathanaamaavali

ॐ विनायकाय नमः	Om Vinaayakaaya Namah
" विघ्नराजाय नमः	" Vighnarajaaya Namah
" गौरीपुत्राय नमः	" Gouree Puthraaya Namah
" गणेश्वराय नमः	" Ganeshwaraaya Namah
" स्कन्दाग्रजाय नमः	" Skandaagrajaaya Namah
" अव्ययाय नमः	" Avyayaaya Namah
" पूताय नमः	" Poothaaya Namah
" दक्षाय नमः	" Dakshaaya Namah
" अध्यक्षाय नमः	" Adyakshaaya Namah
" द्विजप्रियाय नमः	" Dvijapriyaaya Namah
" अग्निगर्वच्छिदे नमः	" Aghnigarvachhide Namah
" इन्द्रश्रीप्रदाय नमः	" Indrasreepradaaya Namah
" वाणीप्रदायकाय नमः	" Vaaneepradaayakaaya Namah
" सर्वसिद्धिप्रदाय नमः	" Sarvaisiddhipradaaya Namah
" शर्वतनयाय नमः	" Sarvathanayaaya Namah
" शर्वरीप्रियाय नमः	" Sarvareepriyaaya Namah

ॐ सर्वात्मकाय नमः	Om Sarvaathmakaaya Namah
" सृष्टिकर्त्रे नमः	" Srishtikathre Namah
" देवानीकार्चिताय नमः	" Devaaneekaarchitaaya Namah
" शिवाय नमः	" Shivaaya Namah
" सिद्धिबुद्धिप्रदाय नमः	" Siddhi-buddhi pradaaya Namah
" शान्ताय नमः	" Santhaaya Namah
" ब्रह्मचारिणे नमः	" Brahmachaarinay Namah
" गजाननाय नमः	" Gajaananaaya Namah
" द्वैमातुराय नमः	" Dvaimaathuraaya Namah
" मुनिस्तुत्याय नमः	" Munisthuthyaaya Namah
" भक्तविघ्नविनाशनाय नमः	" Bhakthavighna vinaashanaaya Namah
" एकदन्ताय नमः	" Aykadanthaaya Namah
" चतुर्बाहवे नमः	" Chathurbhaahave Namah
" चतुराय नमः	" Chathuraaya Namah
" शक्तिमंयुताय नमः	" Shakthisamyuthaaya Namah
" लम्बोदराय नमः	" Lambodaraaya Namah
" शूर्पकर्णाय नमः	" Shoorpakarnaaya Namah
" हरये नमः	" Haraye Namah
" ब्रह्मविदुत्तमाय नमः	" Brahmaaviduthamaaya Namah
" काव्याय नमः	" Kavyaaya Namah
" ग्रहपथये नमः	" Grahapathaye Namah
" कामिने नमः	" Kaminaay Namah

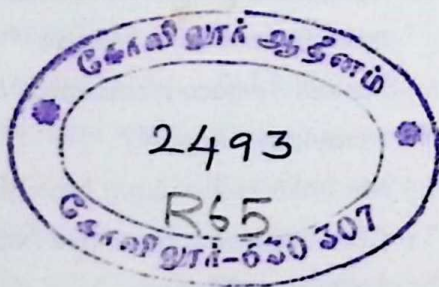


ॐ सोमसूर्याग्निलोचनाय नमः	Om Somasooryaaghniloचनाaya Namah
” पाशांकुशधराय नमः	” Paashamkushadharaaya Namah
” चण्डाय नमः	” Chandaaya Namah
” गुणातीताय नमः	” Gunaatheethaaya Namah
” निरञ्जनाय नमः	” Niranjanaaya Namah
” अकल्मषाय नमः	” Akalmashaaya Namah
” स्वयंसिद्धाय नमः	” Swayamsidhaaya Namah
” सिद्धार्चितपदाम्बुजाय नमः	” Siddhaarchithapadaambuजाaya Namah
” बीजापूराफलासक्ताय नमः	” Beejaapooraphalaasakthaaya Namah
” वरदाय नमः	” Varadaaya Namah
” शाश्वताय नमः	” Saashvathaaya Namah
” कृतिने नमः	” Krithinay Namah
” रमार्चिताय नमः	” Ramaarchithaaya Namah
” वीतभयाय नमः	” Veethabhayaaya Namah
” गदिने नमः	” Gadinay Namah
” चक्रिणे नमः	” Chakrinay Namah
” इक्षुचापधृते नमः	” Ekshuchaapadhrityay Namah
” श्रीदाय नमः	” Sreedaya Namah
” दान्ताय नमः	” Daanthaaya Namah
” अजाय नमः	” Ajaaya Namah
” उत्पलकराय नमः	” Uthpalakaraaya Namah
” श्रीपतिस्तुतिहर्षिताय नमः	” Sreepathisthuthiharshithaaya Namah

ॐ कुलाद्रिभेत्रे नमः	Om Kulaadribhethray Namah
" जटिलाय नमः	" Jatilaaya Namah
" चन्द्रचूडाय नमः	" Chandrachoodaaya Namah
" अमरेश्वराय नमः	" Amareshwaraaya Namah
" नागयज्ञोपवीतये नमः	" Naagayanjnopaveethaye Namah
" कलिकल्मषनाशनाय नमः	" Kalikalmashanaashanaaya Namah
" स्थूलकण्ठाय नमः	" Sthulakandaaya Namah
" स्वयंकर्त्रे नमः	" Swayamkartray Namah
" सामघोषप्रियाय नमः	" Saamaghoshapriyaaya Namah
" पराय नमः	" Paraaya Namah
" स्थूलतुण्डाय नमः	" Sthulathundaaya Namah
" अग्रण्ये नमः	" Agaranye Namah
" धीराय नमः	" Dheeraaya Namah
" वागीशाय नमः	" Vageeshaaya Namah
" सिद्धिदायकाय नमः	" Siddhidaayakaaya Namah
" दूर्वाविल्वप्रियाय नमः	" Doorvaavilvapriyaaya Namah
" कान्ताय नमः	" Kaanthaaya Namah
" पापहारिणे नमः	" Paapahaarinay Namah
" समाहिताय नमः	" Samaahithaaya Namah
" आश्रितश्रीकराय	" Aashrithashreekaraaya Namah
" सौम्याय नमः	" Soumyaaya Namah
" भक्तवाञ्छितदायकाय नमः	" Bhaktavaanchiithadaayakaaya Namah

ॐ शान्ताय नमः	Om Shanthaaya Namah
" अच्युताचार्याय नमः	" Atchuthaarchyaaya Namah
" कैवल्याय नमः	" Kaivalyaaya Namah
" सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहाय नमः	" Satchidaanandavigrahaaya Namah
" ज्ञानिने नमः	" Jnaaninay Namah
" दयायुताय नमः	" Dayaayuthaaya Namah
" ब्रह्मद्वेषविवर्जिताय नमः	" Brahmadveshavivarjithaaya Namah
" प्रमत्तदैत्यभयदाय नमः	" Pramathadaithyabhayadaaya Namah
" व्यक्तमूर्तये नमः	" Vyakthamoorthaye Namah
" अमूर्तिमते नमः	" Amoorthimathay Namah
" शैलेन्द्रतनयोत्सङ्ग	" Sailendra-thanayothsanka-
" खेलनोत्सुकमानसाय नमः	khelanothsukamaanasaaya Namah
" शंकरौत्सङ्गसततखेलनो-	" Sankarotsanka-sathatha-khelano-
त्सुकमानसाय नमः	tsukamaanasaaya Namah
" समस्तजगदाधाराय नमः	" Samastha-jagadaadhaaraaya Namah
" मायिने नमः	" Maayinay Namah
" मूषकवाहनाय नमः	" Mushakavaahanaaya Namah
" चन्द्रचूडामणये नमः	" Chandrachoodaamanaye Namah
" कान्ताय नमः	" Kanthaaya Namah
" पापहारिणे नमः	" Paapahaarinay Namah
" समाहिताय नमः	" Samaahithaaya Namah
" चिन्तामणिद्वीपपतये नमः	" Chintaamanidveepapathaye Namah

ॐ परमात्मने नमः	Om Paramaathmanay Namah
" सर्वविधये नमः	" Sarvavidhayay Namah
" हृष्टाय नमः	" Hrishthaaya Namah
" तुष्टाय नमः	" Tushtaaya Namah
" प्रसन्नात्मने नमः	" Prasannathmanay Namah
" सर्वसिद्धिप्रदायकाय नमः	" Sarvasiddhipradaayakaaya Namah



about this book

Some people have expanded their being to be one with the transcendental Spirit of the universe and thus solved the riddle of life.

They are the great Rishis. They compressed knowledge into forms, so as to last for ages and help generations open the doors to the liberating inner Reality.

The forms of deities — myriad Gods and Goddesses — with many heads and many hands, might have puzzled you. Transcendental vistas, whether perceived by the philosopher or the scientist, exceed the ordinary. And the presentation of these facts calls for extraordinary methods. When you explore the divine forms, you will realise how the Rishis employed such forms to reveal the facets of Reality and to bring you in communion with them.

In this book you will explore the significance of the form of Sri Ganesha, an elephant-headed figure seated on a tiny rat. And as you proceed, the fragrant petals of knowledge unfold themselves reminding you of the glory of the freedom-giving spiritual energies of evolution in you. This book is the first in our series, *Alphabet of Reality*.



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